jan/feb 1998
issue 16

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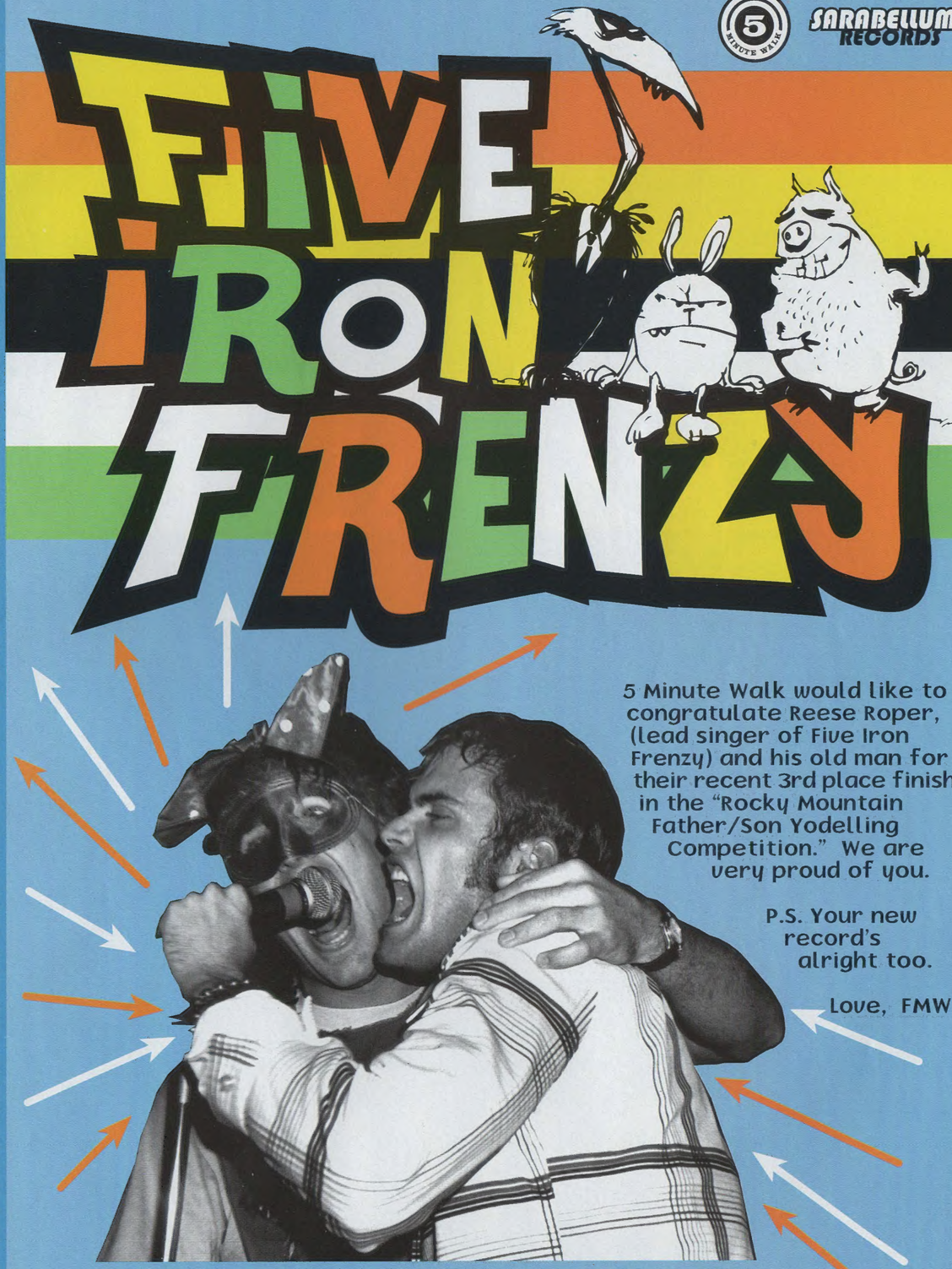

5 Minute Walk would like to congratulate Reese Roper, (lead singer of Five Iron Frenzy) and his old man for their recent 3rd place finish in the "Rocky Mountain Father/Son Yodelling Competition." We are very proud of you.

P.S. Your new record's alright too.

Love, FMW

Love God, Love Others, Take Time to Listen

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feedback

Hey you guys at *7ball* are great. Just got the last issue; it's a great one.

I like how you don't just stick to one kind of music, you range from rock to punk to ska. I also like the artwork and the overall setup of your mag. Your web site is also happenin'. I think you guys should release your mag monthly and, even better yet, weekly. Great luck in the future!

Jordan Lyall
via the Internet

[monthly? who does that?]

Hey. Just thought it was time to let you guys know that, even though you've probably never heard this before, *7ball* MAGAZINE RULES! Getting it in the mail lights up my life. Yeah, but there is one problem with it: When on Earth are you going to go monthly?!

In two hours I've read it twice, cut out pictures and turned a third of the pages into envelopes that I send to friends—and sighed deeply for the fact that I have to wait two whole months before I get my next one! Oh, yeah and um, thanks for that cool article on Every Day Life. I don't listen to 'em, but the article was good anyway. Yep. I really appreciated what it had to say. And thanks for finally covering Value Pac. Next, do The Electrics, maybe. OK, well, you 7-boys (+ girls) are doing a good job. Keep it up.

Corianne Daman
Ocsmet, ID

[you make your own envelopes? what are ya, Amish?]

My question arises from the March/Apr 1997 issue of *7ball* (#11). On page 6, there are various news items and some fotos which all seem to go with various stories. However, there is one which not only does not have a reference in the context of the page, but is also very much out of place in your magazine. While I realize (from other magazine articles) that Twila Paris very much enjoys visiting zoos, the awkward nature of the foto inclusion contextually, the fact that there is no contexted story with it, and the generic nature of the caption ("Twila Paris and a Kangaroo") all seem to infer more than meets my eye.

Sincerely,
Carl James Render
via the Internet

[you're absolutely right. thank you for bringing this to our attention. be sure and check out this issue's news column.]

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7ball magazine
january/february 1998
number 16

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Hello My Christian Brothers and Sisters,
I've thought about subscribing to a Christian music magazine for a while, especially one that majors in modern rock, alternative, hard rock, etc. I hope you all will continue the legend and the great musical representation. Thank you for your time.

Daniel Jones
Riverdale, MD

All Star United,
I was wondering if maybe you could do something with these words. I thought of them and don't know what type of tune to put them to. I only have one verse and a chorus. Here they are:

Verse 1:
I was sittin' by the roadside
Wonderin' what to do
And when I looked up
There was a man in blue.
I said, "Hello"
He asked me my name,
He looked like a nice fellow
I told him my name,
But I didn't feel ashamed
'Cause I knew that's what
Jesus would do.

Chorus:
What would Jesus do,
What would Jesus do.
You have to ask that question
You have to think it through!

That's all I have. Thanks for a great performance at the Wisconsin State Fair! You are da Bomb! God Bless!

Love,
Emily Lyn Wickert
Green Bay, WI

[We have no idea how we ended up with that one]

Dear *7ball* magazine,
I loved the article about Jars of Clay in issue No. 13. I also loved the one on the O.C. Supertones. I got that issue at my local Christian bookstore with the *G.A.S. Collection 2* CD. I think the CD is great. Keep the articles on great and up-and-coming bands coming.

Anthony Price
Pueblo, CO

Thanks *7ball*,
I am a fairly new subscriber to *7ball*. I love your magazine and anxiously await its arrival every other month. The only problem that I have with your magazine is the fact that you describe every CD so vividly and with such excitement, that I want to go out and buy every new release!
Last month, you wrote about Truth clothing. This clothing sounds awesome! Could you please tell me where I can get more information?
Thanks for all your hard work. I really appreciate all you do.

Breanna Robertson
Humble, Texas

[thanks, Breanna. ask for Truth Clothing—and any of the other products you read about in 7ball—at your local Christian retailer. if they don't already carry this cool stuff, they should order it for you.]

Dear *7ball* magazine,
This is a totally awesome magazine. It's also a great way for me to show my friends what Christian music is really about. Now they know it's not just hymns and choruses. It's fun, crazy and wild. Do you think you'll ever have anything about Newsboys in future issues? They're one of my favorite groups and I'd really like to get to know a little bit more about them. Thanks once again for a totally awesome, ragin', dudical magazine that actually has something good in it.

Love in Christ,
Jill Kivett
North Evans, New York

[if you like bands like Newsboys, you should check out our sister publication, RELEASE. it covers more of the "pop" music we love so much.]

Send your letters and artwork to
7ball
2525-C Lebanon Pike, Box 6
Nashville, TN 37214

Letters may be edited for space, clarity, and because we love the power. Remember: We have a magazine, and you don't.

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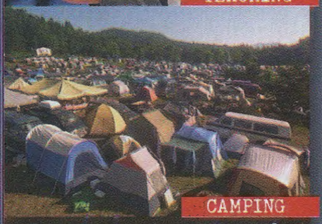
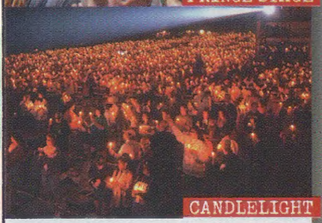

CAMPING

MAIN STAGE

FRINGE STAGE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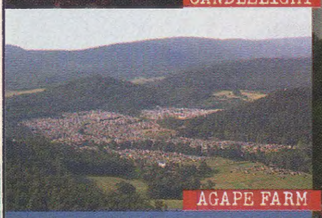
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The original Creation Festival, held annually in Pennsylvania since 1979, has grown to become the largest event of it's type in the world. Creation '98 at the Gorge continues this tradition. The main stage schedule will be the same for both festivals and the complete program will be announced on January 1, 1998.

For more info: 4441 S. Meridian, Suite 275, Puyallup, WA 98373 or call 800-327-6921
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total program will be announced on Jan. 1.

RELEASE 7

On October 4, 1997, The Prayer Chain re-linked one more time to relive its own unique approach to the rock 'n' roll experience. And although vocalist Tim Taber kidded at the show's beginning about how the members had "gotten up from their wheelchairs, and out of their rest homes" for this one, the quartet looked lively and sounded vibrant.

The event took place at the Anaheim Vineyard, in the musically rich Orange County section of southern California. With two large video screens as bookends the deep stage area seemed as large as you'd find in amphitheaters, turning the huge sanctuary into a concert hall when the lights went down.

But this wasn't just any other concert hall, nor was it just any other concert. In addition to the sparks which would most certainly fly from the rekindling of The Prayer Chain's flame, attendees were also treated to short sets by Honey, Jay Electric, Bon Voyage, Starflyer 59, Fold Zandura and Plankeye. A few of these sets took place in the foyer—which should give you an idea of just how big a church the Vineyard is.

Of the support acts, Plankeye was clearly the night's highlight. By featuring its new fifth member, guitarist Ryan Dennee (formerly of The Outnumbered) for the first time, Scott Silletta was freed up to dance all over the stage unrestrained by the requirement of playing a guitar. Mixing old songs with selections from the new album *The One And Only*, Plankeye truly rocked the house and readied the audience for Silletta's favorite band, The Prayer Chain.

The Prayer Chain chose to focus on mostly early material—much to the delight of the fans bouncing up and down in front of the stage. It was a set drawn liberally from *Shawl*, *Whirlpool*, a snippet from *Mercury*, and a few obscurities thrown in for good measure. More than anything, though, it was a reminder of just how amazing a guitarist Andy Prickett is, what a powerful singer Tim Taber continues to be, and how doggone good these two sound when teamed with the rhythm section of bassist Eric Campuzano and drummer Wayne Everett.

A SET LIST:

Never Enough (*Shawl*)	58 (*Shawl*)	Creole (*Mercury*)
Follow Me (*Whirlpool*)	Chalk (*Antarctica*)	Crawl (*Shawl*)
Friend Or Foe (*Antarctica*)	Grylliade (*Mercury*)	Worm (*Shawl*)
I Believe (*Whirlpool*)	Dig Dug (*Shawl*)	
encore	Mercury (*Mercury*)	Sky High (*Mercury*)

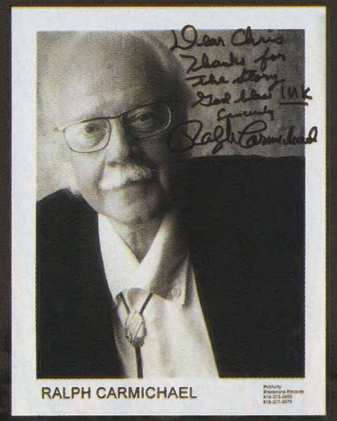
Taber says the whole thing started when he got an email from Campuzano. "He was saying he missed playing bass and wondered if I would consider getting together for a show just for the fun of it. The four of us got together for dinner a week later and decided to do it."

Although it was intended as a one-time special event, there is a chance that Prayer Chain fans may get more. Although there are no plans to write new songs, there are some more demos, which Prickett might compile and release through the Internet. He also wants to put together a video compilation of old concert footage.

And, perhaps, this isn't the final concert, either. "This show was a lot of fun, and it was awesome to see all the fans that showed up to support us," Taber says. Fans flew in from Pennsylvania, Florida, Kansas City, Chicago and Nashville. "But there were a lot of people that obviously didn't want to drop $500 on a plane ticket to come to California.

"I don't know how Andy and Wayne feel, but I would definitely consider doing Cornerstone '98 if they asked us to play. Eric said he would be into that too. That way, a lot more people would have the opportunity to come. We've had some of our best shows at Cornerstone."

—Dan MacIntosh

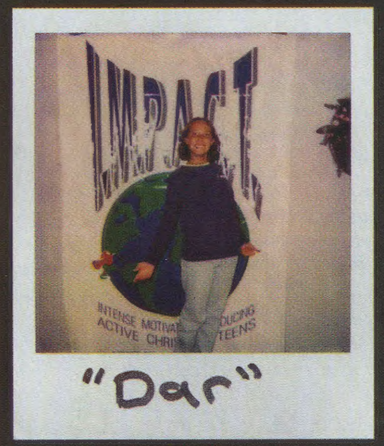


AND NOW THE NEWS

The Insyderz are hard at work on that ska praise and worship album, *The Insyderz Present Skalleluia*. Squint Entertainment expects to have it on shelves in early March.

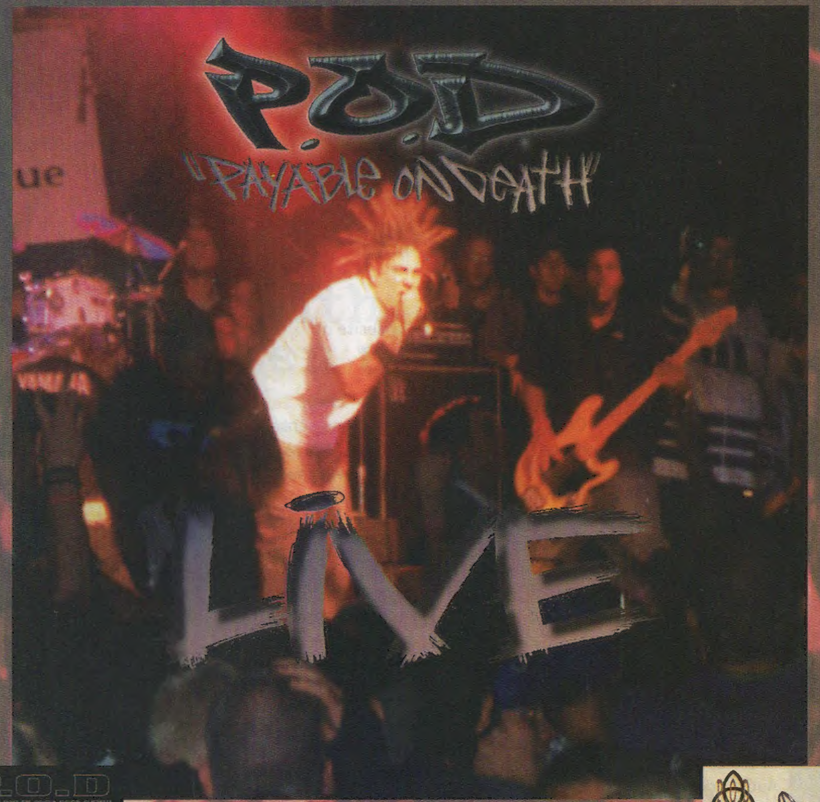
Dime Store Prophets is calling it quits. Currently on tour with their fabulous *Fantastic Distraction*, they've determined that the Lord is calling the individual band members in different directions.

A few words about the latest Caedmon's Call project: The 5-song enhanced CD *Intimate Portrait* includes brand-new songs, a three-song acoustic set, plus 35 minutes of video, rare photos, interviews and interactive animation. The multimedia is courtesy of the folks who made *Actual Reality*, which means it's superlative ("really, really good"). Visit the band on the Web at [caedmons-call.com].



Jars Of Clay's *Much Afraid* debuted at No. 8 on The *Billboard* 200 chart, selling more than 100,000 copies its first week. In fact, the

BACK WITH THE REALNESS...



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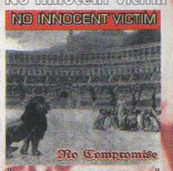

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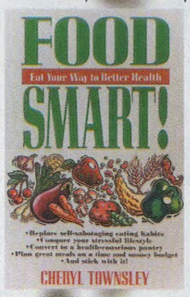
alternative news

record was certified Gold within *30 days* after its release.

To borrow a cliché, the rumors of **Christafari** member Mark Mohr's death are exaggerated. Apparently, rumors about a car accident in Philadelphia are unfounded. The band, meanwhile, has gone through changes—Christafari continues with Mohr and an assortment of new musicians, dubbed "The Soul Fire Crew." Several former Christafari members have formed a group of their own (Temple Yard) and signed with Gotee.

dc Talk recently headlined a rally during Racial Reconciliation Week in Little Rock, Ark. This was the E.R.A.C.E. Foundation's first major outing. Others at the rally included GRITS and boxer Evander Holyfield.

ForeFront's web site, found at [www.forefrontrecords.com], includes the WWJD ("What Would Jesus Do?") game: a test of memory skill, for products from ForeFront, Zondervan, and Youth Specialties. The album includes new music from **Big Tent Revival**, **Geoff Moore & The Distance** and **Skillet**, plus dc Talk, Rebecca St. James, Audio Adrenaline, Newsboys, Smalltown Poets, Bleach, Grammatrain, The Waiting, Considering Lily and Sarah Masen.



Dryve was awarded "Best Adult Alternative Album" at this year's San Diego Music Awards. Thought you'd want to know.

While no one would freely admit to watching *Baywatch*, fans of **Say So** who were flipping around the dial recently might have heard their song, "Something Between You and Me" playing in the background. The Say So track "Stand By Me" was also overheard on a recent episode of *Party of Five*. On the subject of *Party of Five*, the show's producers used **Sarah Masen**'s "All Fall Down" a second time.

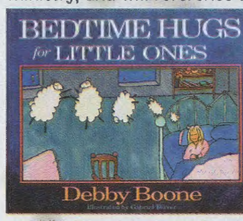
The Corbans are going to have an easier time on the road now: They have a new booking agent, Jon Sylvestor, based in Freemont, Calif. They also found a reliable van within their price range, which means they no longer have to take three cars to every show. Visit their website at [www.organicrecords.com].

Gofishnet.com has begun "Music Central," a nine-channel 24-hour Internet broadcast of Christian music. The channels are broken down into contemporary, alternative, ska, rap, dance/club, worship, rock, and hard music. The site can be accessed at [www.gofishnet.com].

A lot of people are talking about these *Left Behind* books, a series set after a pre-trib rapture. Cowritten by novelist Jerry Jenkins and noted religion writer Tim LaHaye, the series so far includes *Left Behind*, *Tribulation Force* and the latest, *Nicolae*. Although these are novels, the writers have tried very hard to work within the framework of biblical prophecy as they understand it. The books have been optioned for film; production is expected to begin winter 1997, with a projected release in theaters around Easter 1999. Four more books are already planned, slated for publication between now and 2001.

NEW BANDS TO WATCH FOR

Tragedy Ann is the new band from ex-Sometime Sunday members Mikee Bridges, Eric Wittington and Bobby (Jean-Pierre) Sable. Dave Bosley is the bassist. Mikee says the band will have a total focus on ministry, and will reference the likes of Social Distortion and Foo Fighters. LoveWar's Tim Bushong has a new band, **The Channelsurfers**. Dennis Cameron (formerly of Angelica) and Jordan Batten (of Shelter) have teamed up to form **Paradise Now**. Former Holy Soldier drummer Terry "The Animal" Russell has a new band, **Next 10 Days**. **Brandtson** features ex-Six Feet Deep members Myk Porter and Matt Traxler. They say it's pretty guitar heavy, but more emo-pop than hardcore. **Disciple** is a new metal rap-core band, said to be heavier than even POD or Rage Against the Machine (yow!).



REMEMBER IN PRAYER

J.C. Richardson, of the band Sunday's Child, session musician, and producer for projects by Squad Five-O, Dear Ephesus, Johnny Respect, L.S.U. and others, has been diagnosed with what appears to be a malignant, inoperable brain tumor. Our prayers go out during this time of recovery, decision, and strategy as he begins to approach various possibilities regarding treatment. Words of encouragement can be sent to 5305 Oaks Landing Ct; Sugar Hill, GA 30518-6916; or emailed to DeGarage@aol.com.

Many continue to pray for **Steve Rowe** of **Mortification**, diagnosed last year with leukemia. Mortification's web site [www.quantum.net.au/envision] provides an update to his health: "Overall Steve's strength and how he is feeling has been getting much better. We have even started rehearsing again." While Rowe continues to improve, his immune system is less resistant to illnesses such as colds and the flu.

Jesus was a rebel. Jesus was a misfit.

Jesus hung with losers and was beaten up & mocked.

If he stood in your shoes and felt what you feel...

can you tell me, what would Jesus do?

W W J D

(You've got questions. He's got answers.)

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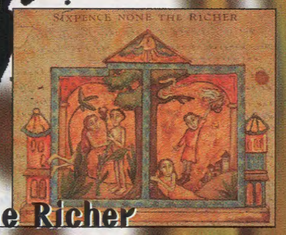
CRITICS HOT PICKS OF '97



no.1 **Sixpence None the Richer**
Sixpence None the Richer (Squint)

2 Ultra Forever	Fold Zandura	(BEC)
3 Much Afraid	Jars of Clay	(Essential)
4 All Star United	All Star United	(Reunion)
5 Watch Me Fall	Kevin Clay	(Alarma)
6 Fantastic Distraction	Dime Store Prophets	(SaraBellum)
7 Thrifty Mr. Kickstar	Dryve	(SaraBellum)
8 Conspiracy No. 5	Third Day	(Reunion)
9 Plumb	Plumb	(Essential)
10 Caedmon's Call	Caedmon's Call	(Warner Alliance)

CRITICS WHO CONTRIBUTED TO THIS POLL:
Frank Chimento, Chris Well, Bruce A. Brown, Brad Caviness, Dan MacIntosh, Ed Rock, Chris M. Short, J. Edward Keyes, Chad Bonham, Mike Parker, Brian Quincy Newcomb

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1. **The Choir** "Yellow Skies" Tattoo 3:54
(written by S. Hindalong, D. Daugherty) © 1993 Never Say Never Songs (ASCAP)
After the recent retrospective *Love Songs and Prayers* and the high-water mark of *Free Flying Soul*, it only seemed fitting for The Choir to share some of their dynamic live performances. More than just a live album, *Let It Fly* is practically a scrapbook from the tour, with some great CD-ROM extras, including the "Sled Dog" music video, interviews, a pictorial biography, plus an appearance from the nefarious Buddy Tattoo.

2. **Jesus Music** "3-D" Organic 3:11
(written by S. Morgan, M. Acevedo, S. Salvador and M. Higgins) © 1997 Non-Perishable Music (ASCAP)
With such a wide range of influences—'60s psychedelia; '70s funk; '80s Euro; praise music—it's no wonder they refer to their gigs as "upbeat God parties." The title track from their label debut, *3-D*, calls to mind the larger perspective that comes in knowing Christ (it's a C.S. Lewis thing).

3. **Chris Taylor** "Good Thing" Rhythm House 6:14
(written by C. Taylor) © 1998 Rhythm House Music (ASCAP)
The former frontman for Love Coma (the same band that also gave us Matt Slocum of Sixpence None the Richer), Chris Taylor returns with his solo label debut, *Down Goes the Day*. The songwriter—who has shared the small screen with game show host Wink Martindale, and also won 5 grand in a jingle contest—says "Good Thing" is the story that best describes the last few years of his life.

4. **Skatman Meredith** "Wrecking Ball" (unsigned) 3:14
(written by D. Meredith) © 1996 Lockjaw Music (BMI)
This unsigned artist actually has a couple of releases making the rounds with those "in-the-know," including the very fine *The Garden* (with bgv's from Whiteheart's Rick Florian). On the Web, find out more about Skatman at [www.unsigned-indie.com].

5. **Farewell To Juliet** "Seconds Count" (unsigned) 4:18
(written by Farewell to Juliet) © 1998 Marathon Records
This moody piece comes from the also rockin' indie release *Grace and Dire Circumstances*. For more info on this unsigned band, email SunnyRoses@aol.com or check out their Web page at [www.netads.com/music/marathon/ftj].

6. **Kyle Knapp** "I'll Wait" (Narrowpath) 4:37
(written by K. Knapp) © 1997 Narrowpath
A kind of audio journal of Kyle Napp's cross-country trip, *Burr Oak Acres* was recorded in several studios (from Omaha to Nashville to Green Boy) and in "various living rooms across North America." While many of the tracks on this folky release have an edge to them (sometimes world weary, sometimes sarcastic), "I'll Wait" is about clinging to hope in the Lord in even the darkest times.

7. **Gotee Brothers** "Poetry, Prose, and Other Sundry Items" Gotee 3:32
(written by T. Collins, J. Elwood, L. Bragg) © 1996 Gotee Music/Up in the Mix (BMI)
A collaborative project headed up by The Gotee Brothers, *Erace* is "the musical expression of frustration" for the racism that continues to separate God's children. The southern-fried pop and funk essay includes a regular cavalcade o' guests, including members of dc Talk, Out of Eden and Christafari, among others.

8. **Sixpence None the Richer** "Love Comma" Sixpence None the Richer 3:57
(written by L. Slocum, M. Slocum) © 1997 Sixpence None the Richer (ASCAP)
Sixpence None the Richer's self-titled debut was a pleasant surprise, and the band's follow-up, *The Dawn Chorus*, is even better. Lead singer Leigh Nash's voice is as sweet as ever, and the band's sound is as jokesters, "Faith, Hope & Love" shows they can be serious when they need to be.

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4. **Tragedy Ann** "Waste" Organic 3:46
(written by Tragedy Ann) © 1997 Tragedy Ann/Pamplin Music Publishing
Sporting three former members of Sometime Sunday, Tragedy Ann is more melodic than the former, but still pretty rockin'. Leader Mikee Bridges says the new band is pretty in-your-face lyrically, as well, with a strong bent toward evangelism.

5. **Symbiotica** "Chemical" Graceland 8:04
(written by L. Cordola, G. Thomas Griffin, T. Katsos and C. Wright) © 1997 Carlotta Publishing/Cordman Music (BMI)
Lanny Cordola never seems to do anything the same way twice. The master musician who has wowed listeners with arena rock, reggae and blues (just to name a few), pushes the envelope again with *Symbiotica*, a sweet project that blends elements of dance music and Celtic pop, with help from vocalist Lanya.

6. **The Channelsurfers** "So Far Away" Organic 4:46
(written by The Channelsurfers) © 1997 Lunkhead Publishing/Ross Island Music Publishing (SESAC)
On *Tunnel Vision*, The Channelsurfers mix a variety of styles—including funk, angular guitar rock and reggae—as a soundtrack for their discussions of absolutes in modern society. "Pop culture is pretty thin," remarks member Tim Bushong. "There is so much more to life than the fleeting, shallow pleasures it offers."

7. **Speck** "Brilliant" Bulletproof 3:43
(written by D. Hutchcraft) © 1997 Gray Dot Songs (ASCAP)
Modern rock band Speck checks in with a track from their label debut on Bulletproof. The self-deprecating humor of "Brilliant" relegates pride to its proper place, reminding us that—most of the time—we're not nearly as brilliant as we think we are.

8. **Sappo** "Taxidermy" Organic 2:05
(written by T. Fadel) © 1997 Sappo/Pamplin Music Publishing
Sappo conjures comparisons with the musical abandonment of The Flaming Lips and the guitar-driven rock of Pavement. Their debut, *Kindred Spearmint*, kicks off with a gruesome metaphor for the way we often attempt to wrestle control away from God.

9. **Dime Store Prophets** "Soothsayer Speaks" SaraBellum 4:32
(written by J. Stevens, M. Liu, S. Hernandez, J. Metzler) © 1997 Busters Reunion Music/5 Minute Walk Music (ASCAP)
Their brilliant soph release, *Fantastic Distraction*—is now also their swan song (see news section, this issue). Here is one more look at one of the best live bands we have ever seen, and who on record would thoughtfully weave proverb with rock 'n' roll.

10. **3 Car Pile-Up** "Parents" Narrowpath 3:42
(written by J. Stump) © 1997 Patmos Music (ASCAP)
The three-piece rock band turns up with a track from their self-titled debut (*3 Car Pile-Up*, if you aren't quite keeping up). While, as an art form, a lot of alternative rock seems to be about rebellion, "Parents" is a sweet (if feedback-laden) ode to the faith that Christian parents hand down to their children.

11. **Hokus Pick** "Faith, Hope & Love" Freedom 3:58
(written by R. Calhoun, D. Strichuk, R. Smith and M. Pierrot) © 1997 Chatawa Music (ASCAP), Hokus Pick (SOCAN)
The happy foursome from the Great White North, Hokus Pick, returns with a humdinger called *Snappy*. The record includes a number of surprises, including a whole radio drama tucked away as a hidden track. And, while their reputa-

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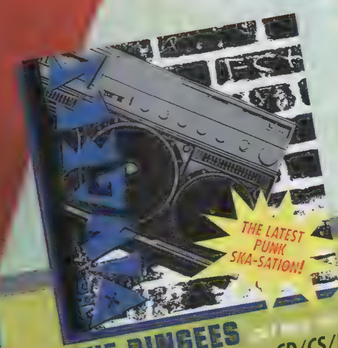

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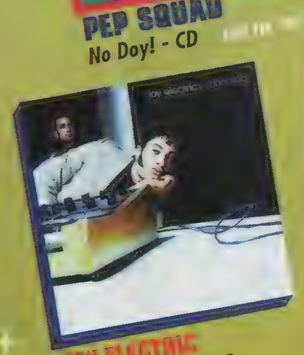

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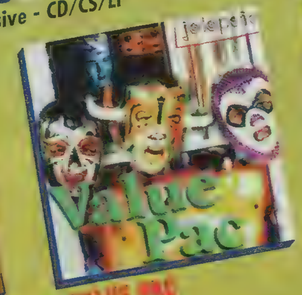

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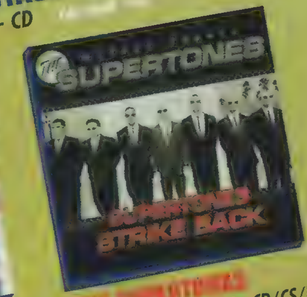

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GHOTI HOOK

by Dan MacIntosh

"We're breaking some stereotypes now ... yeah, a lot of people label us as a punk band, and that's all right if they want to, but we just see ourselves as a rock 'n' roll band."

By filling the world with potassium-fueled fun and good cheer, Ghoti Hook is once again sticking it to the funny bones of the world with its new album, *Banana Man*. Its second long-player is also jam-packed with melodically upbeat pop rock that can go from outrageously silly to deadly serious in a heartbeat. It's a 16 "song" disc where the tune lengths range from three seconds (on the blinkandyou'llmissit "Mendoza") to the especially large-sized "Gimme A Chance," which stretches all the way out to 3:38.

These fast and furious selections are all a part of the "a-peel" of this band, though. Ghoti Hook consists of four very silly gentlemen from the Washington, D.C., area, and Heaven knows how much we can use a little intentional humor from our nation's capital.

They were a five-member unit before guitarist Conrad Tolosa left. But this change came as no surprise to the rest of the band, and all agree it was for the best. "Conrad left the band right after we finished our tour with Slick Shoes and 90 Pound Wuss," explains bassist and vocalist Christian Ergueta, talking to me from Minneapolis, Minn. (just moments after finishing his laundry).

"Conrad was taking some classes to continue his seminary education. The pastor at his church asked if he would serve as an intern pastor for its college-aged ministry. [This] would also give him more time to build his professional career as an accountant. With those things going in Conrad's direction, and God leading him there, he had to be obedient to what the Lord wanted him to do."

It's always hard to learn to live without a valued member of a band, but Ghoti Hook—Ergueta, Adam Neubauer, Joel Bell, and Jamie Tolosa (Conrad's brother)—is managing this transition well. After all, before they were signed, they were a four-piece band for two years. The loss of Conrad will be especially noticeable when it comes to writing songs for the next album.

"We have fewer ideas for songwriting and lyrics, and things like that," Ergueta says.

However, with a newly-finished record and a tour to support the album, the group expects to have enough time to adjust to creating new music as a four-piece. "Being on the road so much now gives us new experiences and a little broader perspective," Ergueta says. "I think it's going to give us a little more insight into how to write our songs."

Tolosa will also be missed because he helped contrast the band's zany image with some of his more serious writings. "Most of his songs are very deep, emotional ... the more serious side of Ghoti Hook, dealing with tough issues such as 'Estevan,' which deals with sexual abuse."

The new record reveals clues to how future Hook albums might be handled. "Joel has taken more of the songwriting under his belt," Ergueta says, "and they're great songs."

Recently, Ghoti Hook played with such big-name ska bands as The Supertones and Five Iron Frenzy in southern California, even though they are clearly not a ska band. Ergueta attributes the band's success at that venue in part to the fact that Ghoti Hook's upbeat brand of music fits in nicely with the dance-enhancing vibe of ska.

The members of Ghoti Hook, in fact, have enjoyed their time on the road with The Supertones. "Their crowd is very receptive to our style of music when they see our live shows, because we have a really good time. The same type of kids who like their stuff, like ours. It's just that our music isn't as 'youth group approved.'"

It wasn't that anyone that smacks of punk's still looked down upon—even the harmless fans say pop sound of Green Hook. That sound may cause some couch leaders to castigate themselves from the home. "We're breaking some stereotypes now by just going out and having people a chance to see just how pop-punk rock 'n' roll can be, that it's a fun thing, and not always aggressive and tough," Esquivel says. "That seems to be the image which anything called 'punk' portrays, for us, it's just having a good time playing fast and happy music. So, yeah, a lot of people label us as a punk band, and that's all right if they want to, but we will see ourselves as a rock 'n' roll band."

And what can be a better rock 'n' roll song than "My Bike," featuring the unmistakable voice of the Wee Herman? "We're just a bunch of goofballs, and we just love goofy movies. Anything that's dumb, we love it. So, we just had to use one of his little samples there and write a song about our 'bike.'"

And the song "Cowboy" isn't exactly Gene Autry-ready material. "That's one of the songs that we like most on this record," Esquivel says. "It's a departure from some of the stuff on Sumo Surprise, but it's just so energetic and fun. If you close your eyes and lay back, I think you can imagine somebody riding their horse, a cowboy."

In fact, the members of Green Hook often take on the appearance of being wannabe cowboys. "Every once in a while, you'll see us with our cowboy hats and vests, and we all have belt buckles because we spend a little too much time in Texas, and we get to see what these cowboys are all about."

Speaking of dressing up, get a load of the guy in the banana suit. With the beret. Go figure. We had our great friend Combat Chuck dress up as Batman Man on the new record."

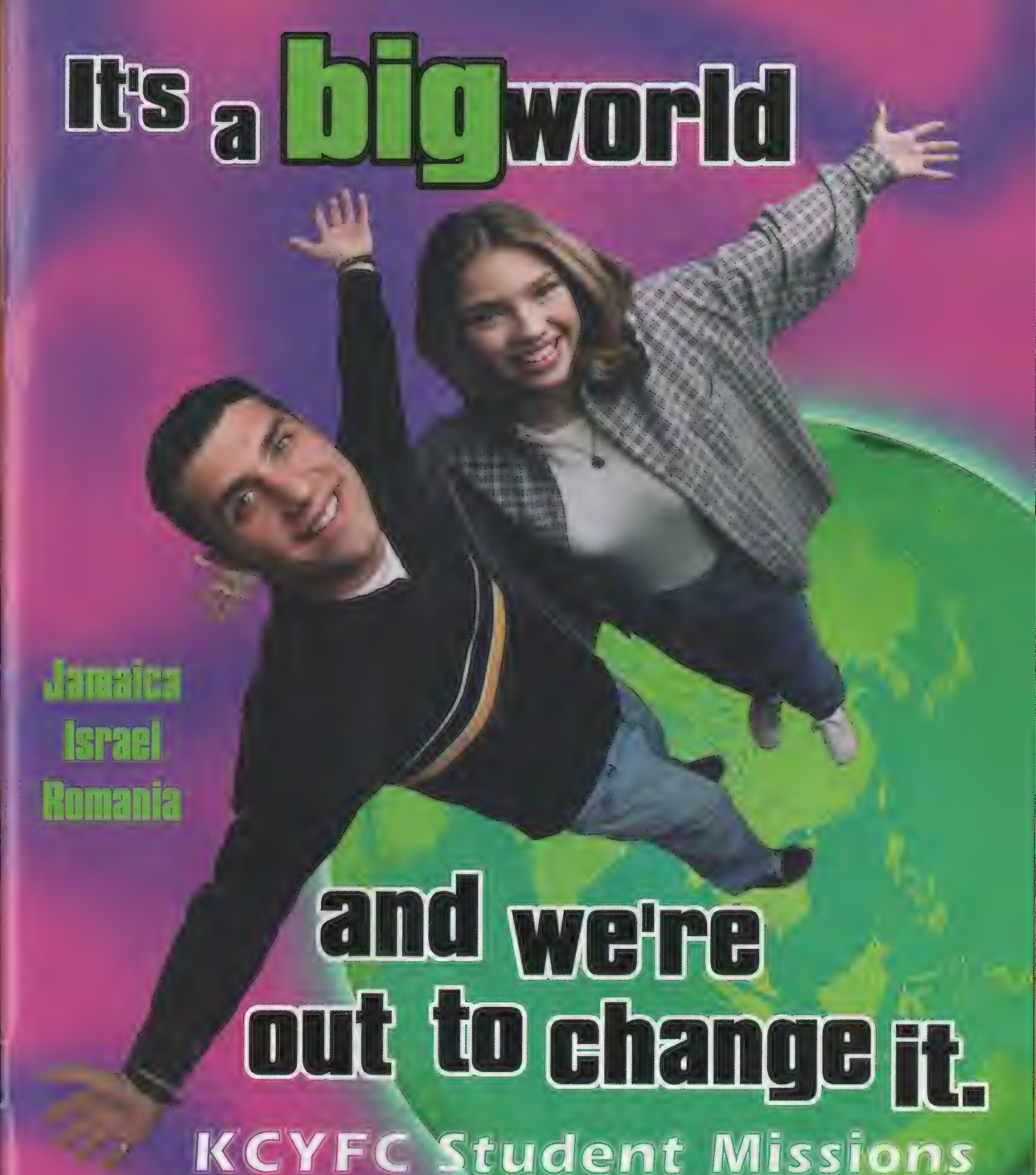
For those who don't know the song "Batman Man," it's about the newest superhero to come on the scene, "It's about a guy who doesn't feel his past doesn't formed since the guys really don't like men

when he's his normal self, the only way he can feel good about himself is in being Batman Man. And when he's in his costume, he's the greatest superhero of all time."

The band says most of their funny songs are inspired by movies that make you smile and have little depth. Their assorted influences include Weezer and Sweet Destruction, and it might surprise a lot of people when they find out that Green Hook not only knows how to read, but that they read a lot of great books on the road. In fact, they've just finished *Surrender to Heaven* by Francine Rivers.

And all of these elements continue to give Green Hook their unique bent. "As a band, we don't see ourselves as a ministry, but, as individuals, we totally do. Green Hook members are 100 percent Christian, 100 percent musicians, and 100 percent entertainers. So, in everything we do, we hope to reflect Christ." 7

It's a big world



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By j. edward keyes

Matt Wignall has a variety of skeletons in his closet. The ringleader for Havalina Rail Co. doesn't mind letting *some* of them out ... like the circumstances surrounding his marriage.

"During the span of recording *Diamond in the Fish*, [Judita and I] met, dated, drove to Las Vegas and got married at the Graceland Wedding Chapel with Elvis. There's a pastor who marries you, but Elvis walks you down the aisle and gives the bride away, and then he stands there playing 'Love Me Tender' real slow while you're exchanging your vows."

There are some he'd probably like to keep under wraps: "In high school [some friends and I] found this book called *Exhibitionism* from the 1890s, and it was a whole book about shedding the bonds and shackles placed on you by humanity by doing things like streaking. So we wholeheartedly embraced this philosophy. My senior year, every weekend, we would plan a new exhibitionist activity for ourselves, like streaking. It's kind of embarrassing, because now I'm a Christian and I lead a Bible study. People will be sharing with one of their friends: *Yeah, I go to a Bible study at Matt Wignall's house*, and their friend will say, *Matt Wignall? Isn't he that naked guy?*"

Then there are some he chooses to excise through music. For example, he identifies with "Total Depravity," found on the haunting *Russian Lullabies*, the third record by Havalina Rail Co. The song paints a picture of an individual who realizes his depravity and comes to grips with the existence of God. "Once he finally reaches the point of absolute depravity," Wignall says, "his redemption comes."

Talking to Wignall, you realize quickly that the timbre of his voice is no indication of the way he feels. Wignall speaks in yawning, sandpapery tones, occasionally laced with rich sarcasm, making his recollections of life all the more fascinating, as if Garrison Kiellor were narrating *Easy Rider*. "The other day I went out to stay with [my brother] in Yosemite in the middle of the week, because I was so stressed out. I went out early in the morning and drove around until I found somewhere that had a cassette copy of *Johnny Cash Live at Fulton County Prison*, and then I slapped it in the old tape deck and drove through the Mojave desert, and into all these California trailer parks."

The bulk of Havalina's new record, *Russian Lullabies*, was recorded while Wignall was travelling through eastern Europe with his wife. "My wife was born in Lithuania, so we travelled around Europe and stayed in Lithuania for a while. I was asking questions and finding out a lot about Russian and eastern European culture. I didn't have a guitar, so I was writing a lot, and when I got back, I would have something I liked, so I would try to put music to it."

Considering the manic personalities that surface throughout *Russian Lullabies*—the oppressed working class student, the jilted lover, the depraved loner—it comes as little surprise when Wignall mentions that he was working through Dostoevsky's *Crime & Punishment* while penning many of the compositions. One can almost see Dostoevsky's guilt-ridden Roskolnikov in the various personas. Wignall agrees with Dostoevsky's idea that whatever we do, wherever we are, there is always a consciousness in all men of the existence of God.

Even if *Russian Lullabies* was terrible—which it isn't—it would stand apart for simply being different. In a market where most

people simultaneously condemn and promote watered-down grunge and easy-to-swallow "modern pop," *Russian Lullabies* is the jagged little pill other releases only pretend to be. Songs like "Changes and Forms" and "The Lovesick Blues of a Young Soviet Proletariat" begin icy, as Wignall's gravely Tom Waits-inspired vocals dodge in and out of the spare instrumentation, and end with a jarring and chaotic climax.

This is not to say *Russian Lullabies* is unrelentingly morose. "St. Petersburg" is as cheery as ever a Havalina song has been, driven by a saucy violin lead and Wignall's debonair croon. The same could be said of "Kalingrad," a vigorous march with a Dick Dale-styled lead guitar part that pushes the piece in a decidedly punk direction.

The difference with *Russian Lullabies* is that these sorts of pieces are not in the majority. "In some ways, we decided, *We've got to get a little more upbeat. We want to sell records. Kids like to dance.* So we set out for that in the beginning, and then we get the record back and it ended up a lot different. When we listened to the finished product, we were like, *Whoah, this is mellow.*"

The rabbit that Havalina pulls out of the hat is that *Russian Lullabies* is mellow without being boring. On the contrary, it's one of the most exciting records you're likely to hear, largely because Wignall & Co. threw out the pop music rule book altogether, and decided to embark into uncharted territory (not surprising for a band that was initially supposed to be "a cross between Mazzy Star and The Pixies").

Rather than stick to a conventional pop lineup (a constrainment the six-member Havalina has always blown to pieces), the band brought in an army of supporting players, including a small string ensemble, loads of percussion, and bells and whistles of all sizes and shapes. Though Wignall admits the concept to make "impressions of eastern Europe" was largely his own, he met little resistance from the other members. "We're kind of like one body," he says. "The studio experience was probably the best we've ever had. We had a lot of fun. We had done a lot of the upbeat songs together [live], and a lot of the other ones we'd sort of built individually."

For example, with "Changes & Forms," they did one session where they hooked everybody up live, and hooked the violin, viola and cello with pickups into the board. "We had mikes all over the floor of the room, and everything got kind of jumbled together and lost, and we just kept rolling," Wignall says. "It was like a big creative free-for-all."

While, to some, *Russian Lullabies* will be a difficult record to grasp, it is undeniably one of the most complex, gratifying, and well-written records to grace the Christian and secular markets. Even so, Wignall is aware of the booby traps he may have set for himself. Any resistance to the record, he says, is due to: 1) The black and white packaging (not having a bright cartoon with a ska guy on it); and 2) the lyrics are a challenge.

"It's not a praise & worship CD," Wignall admits. "It's a little more melancholy. Somewhere along the line, somebody said Christians are always supposed to have a big fat smile on their face, and blubber about how happy they are and surrounding themselves with happy things. I think we should have joy, but you look at the Scripture, and you see, *Jesus wept.* I think there's room for being real people, too, to deal with all those things, and be faced with our depravity." 7

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CURB RECORDS

plankeye

by Frank Chimento

It's become so common to hear someone say, *We're not a Christian band— we're Christians who just play in a band,* that it's refreshing to talk with Plankeye. You see, they *are* a Christian band, and they don't care who knows it.

"The message in Christian music is important," says bassist Luis Garcia, "but I don't like the fact that people place Christians in sort of a mediocre category. Christian music is looked down upon because people view it as mediocre. I don't think that is glorifying to God."

Lead vocalist Scott Silletta, however, points out that sometimes Christian music has earned the title mediocre. "Sometimes it seems like Christians are all living in the same building, patting each other on the back and ignoring the arena rock show down the street." He thinks Christian bands should be of the caliber to perform the big shows in the big venues for the big crowds. "Christians should be excellent examples, because God has given each one of us a gift."

Discussing their faith has never been an issue Plankeye avoids. In fact, they're developing quite a reputation for their staunch Calvinist beliefs. "Yes, the rumors are true—we are pro-Calvinists and have all embraced the reformed faith," says guitarist Eric Balmer.

"Yes, the rumors are true— we are pro-Calvinists and have all embraced the reformed faith."

However, they say, it's not some "contest" of beliefs, as when the Corinthians were taken to task for fighting over whether it was better to be followers of Apollos, or Paul (I Cor. 3:4). "It's not in that regard at all," Balmer says. "It's that we believe the doctrines of Calvin—the doctrines of grace—are what the Bible teaches. This is what we believe when it comes to Christ and Christianity. We're not in some John Calvin club, we're in love with Jesus Christ and want to do everything for His glory."

But, according to Garcia, this theological philosophy didn't come without a struggle. "I've been thinking through these ideas for the past couple of years; the ideas embodied in the Calvinistic form of belief were so great and so heavy that I hated it and had a lot of trouble with it. There were times I literally could not go to the Bible because I was afraid of what I was going to find." The members of Plankeye stress they have studied long and hard about embracing the reformed faith. In fact Garcia points out, Balmer was a Biblical Studies major in college.

However, Balmer takes a fairly humble approach to his knowledge of theology. "We want the fans of Plankeye to know we don't pretend to be experts on this at all. The five of us don't pretend to be experts on the Bible, on God, or anything, but we do search the Scriptures and continue to learn stuff. We believe the convictions we have are of God and He knows we love Him."

The reformed faith basically consists of five main points, with predestination seeming to be one which always sparks debate in the church. Before I can get the word out of my mouth, Balmer jumps at the opportunity, as if wanting the question to be asked: "I think that God chose me and I didn't choose Him. My salvation had nothing to do with me saying, *OK, God, I want you.* God created me as a vessel of honor and He chose me. The only way I saw the Gospel's light was because He first loved me and enlightened my heart."

Garcia adds, "Some people have a problem with predestination because they are afraid to let go. They want to be in control. But the fact is, God is

sovereign and nothing happens without it being allowed by Him."

Drummer Adam Ferry, who seems quiet and reflective, finally speaks: "We don't call ourselves *predestinationalists*, we call ourselves *Calvinists*. Everybody always focuses on that one thing. I believe, first and foremost, that I am nothing. I believe the nature of man is deplorable and Romans clearly describes this. It says our hearts are deceitfully wicked and deplorable. Eric was the first in the band to embrace the reformed faith and then Luis, Scott and I followed, investigated, searched and fought with these same issues. If you don't fight with these issues, I don't think you really get Christianity, because the gravity of it is insane."

He's right, the conversation is absolutely intense—these guys are passionate about their beliefs. Ferry adds, "It is very challenging to subscribe to the complete sovereignty of God. That's why it is Grace."

Yet, night after night, they continue singing about Jesus, talking about Jesus and telling people why they need Jesus. If they believe in predestination, why bother?

"The Bible is our final authority and it commands us to be evangelistic, even if at times we don't fully understand it." According to Garcia, "We may not fully understand everything in the Bible but if we call ourselves Christians, then we must believe it."

Balmer, who seems to be the most knowledgeable about Calvinism, is pretty good at summing up the others' thoughts concisely: "The Bible is filled with mystery. No person's human reasoning can understand that God is Three in One, that Christ was born of a virgin, that God always existed and created the world out of nothing. People like to pick on the fact that God is sovereign and yet man has responsibility. God commanded us to evangelize and that is all the motivation we need."

About this time, the newcomer to the band jumps into the action. Ryan Dennee plays guitar for the band's live show, since Silletta has set his down for performances. About halfway through the last tour, with the Newsboys, Silletta decided to drop the guitar and concentrate on singing. He's happy about that decision—but in the studio, he felt like a guitar was missing so they added another one.

Then they had to find someone to pull it off onstage—enter Dennee, who has actually been a fan of Plankeye's for awhile. "I've only been in the band about a month, and when I heard the new record I couldn't believe I knew the guys who made it. I've known these guys for about six or seven years and this is the best stuff they've ever done."

They added Dennee because he fits in with the guys real well, he plays well, and, Silletta jokes, "chicks dig him." Dennee, however, says they may have picked him for a simpler reason: "I play to tracks."

While Dennee can easily jump in while they're joking around, he can just as easily bring the conversation back to the band's ministry. "Just because God knew, before the creation of the world, who was going to Heaven and who was going to Hell, doesn't mean we know. It is a joy to share the Gospel, because the Bible clearly says that God created us as vessels. Just because we can't control it or convince someone doesn't mean we're not used. The Holy Spirit does the convincing."

There have been other changes with Plankeye, too. They no longer give altar calls—

"I play to tracks."

because they don't like the idea of delivering a handful of kids to people they don't know. In fact, Garcia says there are some churches where he wouldn't *want* people to go. "There are things out there that I would feel bad about if I knew that people were going there and I had a part in it."

"We never close off the possibility to evangelize to an individual after the show," Ferry clarifies. "We've seen bands give altar calls and say, *Hey, how many people got saved tonight?* The kids raise their hands and the band yells, *Praise the Lord*, and jumps into their next song. Where did the accountability go? What happened? Who was that person?"

The members agree many young people today seem to get caught up in the hype and emotionalism of concerts and, before they know it, they're running down an aisle getting "saved." Silletta feels especially passionately about this. "Emotions are really misleading a lot of times," he says. "You have to discern—what's God and what is you? I used to run completely on emotion and that got me into some disastrous situations. The Gospel is, *Repent and be saved.* It's not, *Raise your hands and come on down.* The Bible says they preached and many believed. It never says they had an altar call. That is a totally man-made form of getting saved."

Personally, professionally and spiritually, this band has been through an amazing period of change—which has definitely affected their music. When asked what has happened musically over the past two years, the band responds with a unanimous, "The Newsboys tour."

"That was a neat learning experience," says Garcia, "It definitely bettered us as a band and showed us some things we'd like to change."

Knowing that kids are paying anywhere from $5 to $15 per show is important to Silletta. He wants to do his best to glorify God and give the fans their best performance. To Plankeye, being the best band they can glorifies God.

Their new show has a souped-up production, compared to Plankeye shows before the Newsboys tour. Their style seems to have changed a little, as well. Their new record, *The One and Only*, will undoubtedly categorize Plankeye as more of a pop band, as they move farther away from being labeled "alternative."

"I'm not trying to blow my own horn or anything, but I think we've become better songwriters," Garcia says. "In my opinion a good song is a good song, and I want to write good songs."

The fact is, Plankeye had twice as long to work on this record as a collective group than they had for *Commonwealth*, Ferry says. "This album is different from the others because it has more continuity. We didn't just sit down and say, *OK this is what we want.* Luis actually wanted to make sure all the songs had a similar feel. It was frustrating to play the same 2:4 structure so much, but in the end, it worked out great."

The One and Only should pick up quite a few new fans for the band—but may lose a couple of the old, hardcore Plankeye followers. "We received a lot of criticism on our last record because it was moody," Ferry says. "Well, it was a very weird year. On this record we decided to just have some fun."

When talking about their plans for touring, they decide to have some fun. "We're going to do *The One and Only Tour* in the Spring—March through May. We're thinking of having Point of Grace and Out of Eden open for us. I'd especially like Carman to tell a few stories."

Plankeye fans will have to wait and see. In the meantime, the members of Plankeye want to challenge us all to examine—and understand—what each of us believes. "Roman's 14 exhorts us to be convinced as individuals," Ferry says. "It says anything not from faith is sin. If we're making decisions and accusations and forming opinions about other people without being fully convinced in our own minds what we believe, we may be in sin—on the judgmental seat, looking at someone else while having a plank in our own eye. No pun intended."

We're thinking of having Point of Grace and Out of Eden open for us, I'd especially like Carman to tell a few stories."

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"I think this generation is still trying to discover Holy Soldier. A lot of fans of the first two albums never caught onto *Promise Man* ... [*Encore*] is really a bridge between the new and the old."

HOLY SOLDIER

by Mike Parker

Contrary to what you may have heard, Holy Soldier has not broken up. Ever. In fact, they are so not broken up that they have released *Encore*, a live retrospective, which should bring new fans up to date. "We want to celebrate our success," says Andy Robbins, Holy Soldier founder and bass player. "I mean, we had 10 or 12 Top 10 singles. A lot of them were award-winning songs. We wanted to highlight them to the best of our ability. But we also wanted to close that chapter on our career and open up a whole new chapter."

"I think this generation is still trying to discover Holy Soldier," adds drummer Jason Martin, the band's newest member. "A lot of fans of the first two albums never caught onto *Promise Man*. But the cool thing about *Encore* is that it has the older sound they loved, but as they listen to it they'll get the new sound, too. It's really a bridge between the new and the old."

Holy Soldier has certainly got a lot to celebrate. When signed in 1990 as Myrrh's first heavy metal band, they didn't create a buzz—they created a roar! As a top drawing act in the Hollywood club scene, they were doing what most Christian bands could only dream of: taking the Gospel message to mainstream venues.

Their self-titled debut exceeded all expectations, and the group copped two Dove Awards, for "Metal Album of the Year" and "Metal Song of the Year." The follow-up, 1992's *Last Train*, paired the group with Seattle grungemeister producer, David Zaffiro. The album quickly climbed to No. 10 on *Billboard's* Christian music sales chart.

Poised to repeat the success of their debut effort, Holy Soldier began an intensive touring schedule. Toward the end of the tour, lead vocalist Steven Patrick decided to call it quits to spend more time with his family. News of Patrick's departure quickly sparked rumors of a band break up. Vocalist Eric Wayne joined the band helping to dispel the rumors of an early demise, but Holy Soldier's momentum had been broken. They spent the next year playing selected dates, and creating a new sound to capitalize on Wayne's vocal stylings.

By the time *Promise Man*, the band's ForeFront debut, hit shelves, Holy Soldier had reinvented itself. *Promise Man* charted three Christian rock radio No. 1 songs, and once again HS walked away with Dove Awards for the re-christened categories "Metal/Hard Rock Album" and "Metal/Hard Rock Song of the Year." The accolades did not translate into record sales, however, and ForeFront did not pick up the option on their contract.

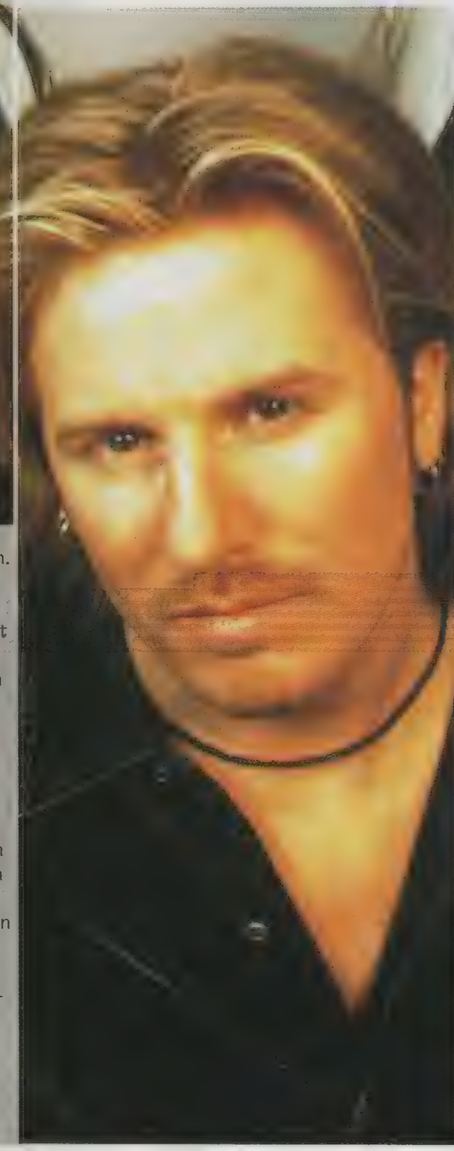
Rumors of an untimely death once again circulated. Taking an attitude of, *If you want something done right*, Robbins formed his own record label. "For the last several years I've had the desire to do something as an extension of what I do as a musician, something more than just being the bass player for Holy Soldier," he says. "I've always taken an interest in other artists and tried to do whatever I could to help them. I started Spaceport Records with the intention of putting out four or five titles from different artists that I have had my eye on for the last couple of years. I had no idea when I started Spaceport I was going to sign Holy Soldier. That just kind of fell into my lap."

As the first Spaceport release, *Encore* puts a cap on the old sound, Robbins says. "We brought in Steven and did a lot of the older songs with him. It was something I think we really needed to do as a group. When we parted with Steven there really wasn't any closure for him or us. It was kind of like, we were in the middle of touring, he left the group to spend more time with his family, we had to pick up somebody else and get back out on the road. For a lot of our fans, it was unresolved."

While *Encore* celebrates the past, the members of Holy Soldier are already looking ahead. "Musically, the goal is to stay current," Martin says. "That doesn't mean change for the sake of change, but it does mean staying on the cutting edge. I think there are two very distinct elements involved: There is the music and there are the lyrics. And I think sometimes the lyrics in the Christian marketplace are sometimes overscrutinized at the expense of the music. Sometimes I think we are not singing about things that are real, about where people are. I mean, if I put Jesus' name in a song, I want it to mean something."

And they want it to "mean something" to everyone who hears it. "I have always been an advocate of the concept that Christian music doesn't have to stay in Christian venues to be Christian," Robbins says. "Over the years, Holy Soldier has been so embraced by the Christian community that we found ourselves playing a lot more festivals and church-sponsored dates, as opposed to our first tour, when we were doing dates with Alice In Chains.

"A lot has changed for us and we have to be mature enough to accept that. Bottom line is this: I read our mail. I see how songs Holy Soldier has recorded have touched people's lives. That's our whole motivation for doing this. I think that's where the true ministry is."



MUSIC FOR THE WHOLE FAMILY

SEVEN DAY JESUS

Chris M. Short

It's 1:30 a.m. and Seven Day Jesus is sitting at a booth in Chubby's on Broadway in Kansas City, Mo. About 20 fans nervously approach the band shyly, shaking hands and thanking them for the show. The band is tired, even though this is only the third stop on the *Rock 'n' Roll Paradise Tour* with Fold Zandura and Plankeye headlining. It's been a long day, but they still smile, make jokes, listen, and thank the fans for supporting them and hanging out after the show.

The band admits that going into this tour, they were a bit nervous about how their fans would react to the new material from their self-titled follow-up to *The Hunger*. Why? They have changed their sound from the debut's melodic grunge to a power pop approach similar to The Posies, a mellower MxPx, or Superchunk. Lead vocalist Brian McSweeney states matter-of-factly, "Honestly, I don't think we changed it as much as we funnelled what worked best with the last record. We just took what works and amplified it, and took what doesn't work and put it on the back burner."

Upon further examination of *The Hunger*, McSweeney's point is well taken. Melody has always been important to Seven Day Jesus' songs, and that record reflects it, though with an edgy and heavier interpretation. McSweeney adds, "Maybe we didn't know exactly where we were [as a band musically]. I think

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this record is way more true to who we are." Guitarist Chris Beaty agrees, "On the first album we were into a lot of heavier stuff, but that was like a phase we went through."

Influenced by the likes of the Foo Fighters, the Posies, as well as Steven Curtis Chapman and Michael English (McSweeney's vocal hero), they have moved toward "power pop," which better reflects the personality of the band. "I am an '80s child, a pop freak," laughs McSweeney, "from Julian Lennon to Duran Duran to Cyndi Lauper. I guess that's kinda embarrassing, in a way."

Seven Day Jesus isn't a collection of giddy be-bop pop tunes, though. Tension permeates the record, from the straight-up power pop of "Butterfly" to the heavier "Who Am I" to the passionate "Sea of Forgetfulness." The vocals are more integrated into the songs, complemented with nice harmonies, while the choruses are so catchy they make you want to sing along.

Their retooled sound is not the only change they have gone through over the last year. For one, McSweeney and Beaty are now joined by new members Kevin Adkins and Russ Fox (drums and bass, respectively). They have made the bold jump from an independent label, 5 Minute Walk, to ForeFront Records, home of dc Talk and Audio Adrenaline. The band agrees that ForeFront has been a blessing from God for everything from advice and guidance to the increased distribution their record will see.

Regarding Eddie DeGarmo, ForeFront executive vice president of A&R, a huge grin comes over McSweeney's tired face as he says, "I've got a little story I've gotta tell." When Seven Day Jesus was on tour with Third Day last fall, DeGarmo flew out to hear the band for the first time. "He really trashed us pretty bad," McSweeney recalls, laughing. "But, because of his honesty and his experience, not only as a label guy but as an artist himself, we respected that."

The band members admire how DeGarmo and ForeFront offered suggestions, made observations, and provided support without dictating who or what Seven Day Jesus should be. "They have given us a lot of advice and opened our eyes to a lot of stuff to think about," adds McSweeney.

Arguably, Seven Day Jesus' greatest strength can be found in their lyrics. *The Hunger* was characterized by songs about doubt, irony and confusion, yet offering a hope through all the darkness. With the new record, lyricist McSweeney consciously tried to show the other side of the Christian walk.

Beaty says, "We are always trying to be real. The things he wrote about were dark, but that's all a part of Christianity. I think we wrote more about the darker stuff because we were going through that stuff. Now we are learning about happy stuff and kinda mixing it together. It's all relevant."

Themes vary from the change a person experiences when accepting Christ ("Butterfly"), to finding personal identity in Christ ("Who Am I"). Our need for God's love is expressed in "My

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friend," which McSweeney explains is not only about the homeless we see everyday, but also the people we don't really *think* need love. "The businessmen in skyscrapers need love as much as the homeless people," he says. "Maybe even more so, because the homeless people don't have all the junk in their lives to get in the way of them and the Lord."

While this record offers more hope than its predecessor, that isn't to say the record doesn't have any dark moments: "Down with the Ship," for example, is filled with hopelessness and frustration about the broken world we live in. Leaning over the table, McSweeney says, "The world is sick. It's just what we have let ourselves become."

Sound bleak? Well, look at the hope and truth in the chorus: *I am never going down with the ship/ You and me can find a better way to get to the shore/ I don't care what anybody might say.*

The members of Seven Day Jesus take the ministry side of their music very seriously. While admitting that no one in the group is a preacher, they see ministry opportunities before and after the show. Beaty says, "I think we are really into a one-on-one ministry, talking to people after the show. Being there to listen to people, to talk with them and to see what is going on with them. We know they look up to us."

They also seek to show others that they are just like the fans they interact with daily. Beaty gestures to fans seated at several tables put together, "We used to go see bands and say, *WOW, that is Eric from the Prayer Chain!* and freak out. I just want them to know we are just like they are." At this diner in Kansas City, the band proves the point. They talk with people, laugh, and enjoy themselves. Most importantly, they do not take themselves too seriously.

While the members of Seven Day Jesus earnestly strive to write great pop songs and reach out to people, they don't know what the future holds. "I think everybody has ambitions and goals but as far as us trying to predict, I don't think we can do that," ponders McSweeney. Beaty quickly adds, "We want to do music that makes us happy and that makes others happy. And we want to do it as long as possible. Everybody has a *change your life* record. We would love to do that—not that it has to be the most epic record in the world."

The band isn't content to be classified and put on a shelf either. McSweeney explains, "We wanted to make a record that is energetic, as well passionate and beautiful. We wanted to make music that appeals to my parents, my little brother, and me—a record that is driven by melody and message. So, you don't have to be an alternative music fan to like it."

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Minneapolis is the coldest city of the tour: The ground is covered with a thick blanket of snow. John, 18, from Mission Viejo, Calif., didn't bring a coat; he wears his sweater over his head to keep warm. Scotia, 20, from Bowie, Md., has an extra jacket, but someone already borrowed it. The Mall of America is huge (there is even an amusement park inside!). As we walk through the mall, we look for a good place to sit and tackle our final discussion. We find a green hot tub display in the middle of the mall. There is no water in it, so most of us decide to sit inside.

Jim Burgen, road pastor for the trip, kicks off the discussion: "What's the No. 1 issue you and your peers face that is out there right now? For some people, sex and dating is the No. 1 issue, so that's what we're going to talk about today. Who should you date and what should you do when you date? How far should you go? What is the purpose of dating?"

"You date for companionship and to have a good time," says Audio A member Ben Cissell, "until you find someone that you want to marry."

"It is a big issue," says Vicki, 20, from Danville, Calif. "A lot of guys I've dated in the past have been bad. But I won't date anyone now who's not a Christian."

Jim asks, "What do you look for in someone that you date? Does everyone agree that you should only date a Christian?"

"I agree," responds Chad, 18, from Littleton, Colo.

"It is easier for someone to pull you down, than it is for you to pull that person up," says Lisa, from Huntington Beach, Calif. "You may go into a relationship saying, *I'll date him and bring him to God,* but it's not going to happen.

"I want someone who is going to challenge me—someone who is going to challenge my relationship with Christ and my love for Christ," she continues, "I'm looking for someone who will motivate me in stepping forward and growing in that relationship with Christ. It is a big attraction for me when I can look at a man of God and want to worship and love God even more."

"I won't date anyone who's not a Christian," Ben says. "Some people have a certain plan or criteria that they establish and they don't change their minds."

Jim asks, "What about witnessing to someone you're dating?" "It worked for me," says Audio A member Will McGinniss. "We were friends for 7 months and I had the opportunity to tell her about the Lord, but I got to the point in our relationship where I was having feelings for her more than just a friend. I said, *I really can't date you anymore because you're not going to know the love I know. I know God, the Creator of love.* She wasn't willing to go the next step of knowing Jesus personally. I said, *We have to stop here because I am getting attached.* We had a talk and went our separate ways for a month or so."

"Even though it broke your heart," Jim asks, "you were willing to walk away from the relationship until she took that next step?"

"I did," Will replies. "It hurt. It was the hardest thing I ever did. I don't know if Mark or Bob remember that time, but I bawled my eyes out. I was upset and it was hard. I think God honored that. She came to a point of accepting Christ and our relationship grew from there. We did get married and Christ is No. 1 in our relationship now."

Jim then asks, "How long should you wait before you get physically involved? How physically involved should dating couples become?"

"Hand-holding," Scotia answers. "Having been sexually active before I was walking with Christ, I personally wouldn't be satisfied with just kissing. Holding hands is as far as I'm going to go. That is the standard I have set."

"You're not going to kiss a man until you kiss him in the aisle?"

"That's what I want," Scotia replies. "I have kissed guys since I have been walking with Christ, but it messes up the whole relationship. The focus stopped being on learning to communicate through words. It started being a big intimacy thing, and I felt like it ruined the relationship."—*Ginny McCabe*

Audio Adrenaline took seven young people on the road, along with Pastor Jim Burgen, to talk about relevant topics. The group hit the road with Audio Adrenaline members Mark Stuart, Bob Herdman, Will McGinniss and Ben Cissell. The book Some Kind of Journey: 7 Days, 7 Issues, 7 Souls—On the Road with Audio Adrenaline *and the album* Some Kind of Zombie *are in stores now. Look for Audio Adrenaline on the road with special guests The Supertones.*

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SATELLITE SOUL

The day of the 1995 Orange Bowl was memorable to Satellite Soul for two reasons: 1) Nebraska quarterback Tommy Frazier's incredible 80-yard touchdown run, where he laughed his way into the endzone; and 2) Satellite Soul was formed. That was January 2. The following day they practiced and, four days later, performed their first show.

Unofficially, their journey really began in 1994 when Tim Suttles (vocals, guitar, harmonica) and Rustin Smith (guitar, vocals) played coffee shops, bars and churches in and around Manhattan, Kan. Suttles was attending Kansas State and Smith was at Manhattan Christian College.

Eventually, Suttles and Smith realized they needed a full band at some of the gigs they booked. They hooked up with bassist Tyler Simpson and drummer Ryan Green through mutual friends on that cold January day in Kansas. "Then we proceeded to book ourselves like idiots until we played 130 shows by the time the year was over," Suttles states, slightly perplexed.

Satellite Soul's self-titled debut can best be described as roots rock with shades of Rich Mullins, The Beatles and Vigilantes of Love. The 14 tracks take you through lands of acoustic guitars, jangling Rickenbachers, melodious harmonica, and even a dulcimer. Add earthy lyrics that speak of all areas of human experience and you get what can only be described as genuine and meaningful.

The blending of '60s and '90s influences with a full rock band sound produce a unique sound, though not without the ease of comparisons, such as Gin Blossoms, early R.E.M., and Son Volt. Smith laughs, "At first we thought we were gonna be the Christian Gin Blossoms."

"Then we realized there were already 50 of them!" finishes Suttles, and the band erupts with laughter. "Ever since then, we've been trying to be ourselves."

Suttles is one of the best and most refreshing lyricists to come onto the scene in the last few years. He immediately gives credit to the late Rich Mullins. "He is the whole reason I started playing music," Suttles says. "I heard his song 'Elijah' on the way to church one day, and I thought, *I gotta do this.*" He began working on Mullins' songs, learning them well enough to perform for youth groups and churches. And then came a fateful meeting: "I saw him at a concert and he said, *You should stop doing other people's music and write your own. I would rather hear what you have to say, than what I had to say secondhand.*"

The stage presence of Mullins' band, the Ragamuffins, also had an affect on Satellite Soul. Green observes, "The Ragamuffins were artists, and they didn't try to be anything else onstage. They were really messy. Seeing them, you say, *That's sloppy, but that is the coolest sloppy I have ever seen.* If that is sloppy, then I want to be sloppy."

A recent acoustic performance at William Jewell College in Kansas City exemplified spontaneity and self-mockery of mistakes during songs. The band was having fun, putting more emphasis on the message than the delivery of music. Suttles' lyrics and the band's music demonstrate a certain vulnerability, an organic feel, and a familiarity, as if these guys were your neighbors.

Satellite Soul wants to be dedicated to living the Christian life in a real and meaningful way. They are vulnerable, honest, and humble—all these characteristics permeate their music, as well as their lives. Their ultimate goal is to be a vehicle for God and His Spirit to move in the lives of people who hear their music.

"People talk about their shows, how they are a great live band," Smith adds, sighing. "Sometimes that gets important to me, but I think that is when I've lost perspective. You can be a great band, but if people's hearts don't get impacted by your ministry, that isn't OK for me. I don't wanna do that."—*Chris M. Short*

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Are you employed? ❒Yes ❒No

Family income? ❒under $20,000 ❒$20,000-35,000 ❒$35,000-50,000 ❒$50,000-65,000 ❒$65,000-80,000 ❒over $80,000

Number of children ❒0 ❒1 ❒2 ❒3 ❒4 ❒5+

Age of oldest child_____ Age of youngest child_____

LIFESTYLE
(check all that apply)

	Own	Will buy	Will not buy
automobile	❒	❒	❒
cosmetics	❒	❒	❒
athletic apparel	❒	❒	❒
sunglasses	❒	❒	❒
books	❒	❒	❒
credit card(s)	❒	❒	❒
phone card(s)	❒	❒	❒
concert/festival T-shirts	❒	❒	❒
cable/satellite television	❒	❒	❒
magazine subscriptions	❒	❒	❒

ENTERTAINMENT
(check all that apply)

	Own	Will buy	Will not buy
video game player	❒	❒	❒
blank audio/video tapes	❒	❒	❒
prerecorded videos	❒	❒	❒
cassette recorder/player	❒	❒	❒
compact disc player	❒	❒	❒
portable CD/tape player	❒	❒	❒
personal stereo/walkman	❒	❒	❒
mini disc player	❒	❒	❒
stereo system	❒	❒	❒
laser disc player	❒	❒	❒
DAT player	❒	❒	❒

COMPUTER

Do you own a computer? ❒Yes ❒No

Do you have an Internet service provider? ❒Yes ❒No

Which online service do you subscribe to? ❒None ❒AOL ❒CompuServe ❒Prodigy ❒Other_____

Have you made purchases on the Internet? ❒Yes ❒No

On average, how much time do you spend online (per week)? ❒0-1hrs ❒1-2hrs ❒2-3hrs ❒3-4hrs ❒4hrs +

Which sites do you frequent most often? ❒Religion ❒Arts & Humanities ❒Government ❒News and Media ❒Health ❒Education ❒Employment Opportunities ❒Recreation & Sports ❒Entertainment and Games ❒Science ❒Social Science ❒Society & Culture ❒Business & Economy ❒Music

Do you take advantage of "enhanced" CDs or CD-ROMs? ❒Yes ❒No

EQUIPMENT
(check all that apply)

	last year	next year	won't do
play electric guitar	❒	❒	❒
play acoustical guitar	❒	❒	❒
play electric keyboard	❒	❒	❒
play piano	❒	❒	❒
play drums/percussion	❒	❒	❒
play other instruments	❒	❒	❒
perform in, work in, or own a studio	❒	❒	❒

How many Christian CDs/cassettes did you purchase last year? ❒0-3 ❒4-7 ❒8-11 ❒12-15 ❒15-20 ❒21+

How many CDs/cassettes did 7ball influence you to purchase last year? ❒0-3 ❒4-7 ❒8-11 ❒12-15 ❒15-20 ❒21+

Estimate the number of Christian CDs/cassettes you will purchase next year: ❒0-3 ❒4-7 ❒8-11 ❒12-15 ❒15-20 ❒21+

Please rank where you buy most CDs/cassettes:

	never	sometimes	most often
Christian retail store	❒	❒	❒
mainstream record store	❒	❒	❒
mass merchandise store (Walmart, etc)	❒	❒	❒
music mail order club	❒	❒	❒
concert/festival	❒	❒	❒

How often do you visit a Christian retail store?
❒every week ❒2-3 times/mth ❒once/mth
❒every other mth ❒4 times/yr ❒once/yr

Which products do you purchase in Christian retail stores? (check all that apply) ❒CDs/cassettes ❒videos ❒books ❒Bibles ❒art ❒gifts ❒clothing

How often do you visit a mainstream music store?
❒every week ❒2-3 times/mth ❒once/mth
❒every other mth ❒4 times/yr ❒once/yr

What influences your music purchasing decisions the most? (choose one) ❒concert ❒word of mouth ❒magazines ❒TV ❒radio ❒other_____

When "just browsing" in a retail store, what most influences you to make a music purchase? (choose one)
❒impulse ❒price ❒clerk recommendation ❒listening center ❒compilation CDs ❒product packaging

Do you use music product coupons? ❒Yes ❒No

Where do you find out about the majority of concerts you attend?
❒newspaper ❒TV ❒magazines ❒church ❒radio ❒other_____

How many Christian concerts did you attend last year?
❒0-3 ❒4-6 ❒7-9 ❒10-12 ❒13-15 ❒15+

How often do you listen to Christian radio? ❒never ❒on occasion ❒most of the time ❒I'm a fanatic

How often do you listen to mainstream radio? ❒never ❒on occasion ❒most of the time ❒I'm a fanatic

What style of music do you enjoy? (check all that apply)
❒Modern rock/Alternative ❒Rap ❒Pop ❒R&B ❒Country ❒Jazz ❒Techno/Electronica ❒Metal ❒Punk/Ska ❒Adult Contemporary ❒Gospel ❒Praise and Worship ❒Southern Gospel

What other Christian magazines do you read often?
❒RELEASE ❒HM ❒Campus Life ❒CCM ❒other_____

Check all church activities that you are involved in:
❒youth group ❒music ministry (choir, band, etc.) ❒missions ❒drama ❒children's ministry

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❒1 ❒2 ❒3 ❒4 or more

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❒0 ❒1 ❒2 ❒3 ❒4 ❒5+

Rate the following elements of 7ball magazine:

	blah	average	I like it	awesome
look: design & photography	❒	❒	❒	❒
editorial content	❒	❒	❒	❒
accuracy of reviews	❒	❒	❒	❒
overall "hipness" factor	❒	❒	❒	❒

Do you currently subscribe to 7ball? ❒Yes ❒No

Would you be interested in other products that feature Christian artists (example: books, fanzines, tourbooks, biographies)? ❒Yes ❒No

What is your church affiliation?
❒ Assemblies of God ❒ Church of God ❒ Nazarene
❒ Baptist ❒ Presbyterian ❒ Episcopal
❒ Methodist ❒ Catholic ❒ Lutheran
❒ Church of Christ ❒ Nondenominational/Charismatic
❒ Nondenominational/Non-charismatic
❒ Foursquare ❒ Other_____

What would you like to change or see more of in 7ball magazine?_____

What is your favorite department or "section" of 7ball magazine?_____

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BANKSHOTS

Merbabies

The number of bands in Christian music who claim underground "noise-rock" heroes Dinosaur Jr. as their chief musical influence could probably be counted on less than a few fingers. As such, the Merbabies have been especially tough to explain to an unfamiliar audience.

The effort proves well worth it, however, as the band's music showcases many other influences, revealing the Merbabies to be true-blue fans of a myriad of musical styles. Guitarist and principal songwriter Chris Bowden's singing voice recalls Frank Black and the Pixies, while his songwriting hints at a fondness for wordsmiths like Bob Dylan. A couple of tracks from the band's debut album, such as the live show favorite, "Lemonade," step further out, adding splashes of slide guitar and bona fide country music to the mix. It's not the first thing one might have expected of Bowden, formerly the drummer of Focused.

The Merbabies, including bassist Brian Ure and drummer Lynn Barron, met one another through their college group Bible study. The band seems most at home in the 18-and-over college-oriented venues, sharing audiences with bands like Starflyer 59.

"Our music draws all ages, but it definitely tends to be a very different crowd than what you'd find at a Supertones show," explains Bowden. "I don't want to use the word 'mature,' but we seem to get an older, more diverse crowd," he says.

"A lot of my friends' parents listen to our music, which is really weird," Bowden adds, "but it's kind of cool, too."

Bowden shuns the observational approach to writing; his lyrics come from personal experience. He shares a penchant for the melancholy with songwriting role models like Neil Young and Hank Williams.

Several of his songs, such as "Long Distance," deal with crumbling romantic relationships. Others, such as "She Dreams of Me," detail Bowden's trust in God's perfect plan for his future, and the future of the significant other he'll someday find. "It's about being patient, and being hopeful at the same time," Bowden explains. "I wonder what she'll look like. I'm looking forward to it, but I'm not going to rush anything." Bowden points out that while his songs may detail events of his own life, most of them concern experiences that most people have in common. "Here We Go Again" illustrates Bowden's take on Romans 7:7-25, where Paul declares, *No matter which way I turn, I can't make myself do right. I want to, but I can't. When I want to do good, I don't. And when I try not to do wrong, I do it anyway* (NLT). Bowden explains, "It's a song about sin creeping up again. We're stuck in these bodies, and it will always be a struggle against sin. I think that's something a lot of people can relate to."

Bowden is quick to remind it's not all dark at the end of the tunnel. For example, "If I Could" seems pretty happy. "So, the album's not all about trials and struggle," Bowden declares, as if asking us to believe he's got something other than a one-track mind.

"Then again, it's another song about a girl," he says, laughing. "I write songs about girls too much."—*Jeff Elbel*

Thee Spivies

I entered Ecco's Italian restaurant in Long Beach, Calif., looking for four guys with no last names who would be wearing matching suits, white shirts, and skinny black ties.

"Hi, I'm Clark!"

"I'm Ivan!"

"I'm Rob!"

"I'm Chris!"

"And we are ... Thee Spivies!"

They actually said that, yes. And yes again, they were in full show dress for our conversation over shirt-endangering pizza sauce. Thee Spivies go far beyond promotion of good, clean, wacky, hyperactive fun; they live it.

"It's all part of hearkening back to a better time," offers vocalist and guitarist Clark.

"A time when bands actually looked good," interjects guitarist/vocalist Ivan, typically the quietest of the bunch.

A common ice-breaker for music journalists is to ask about the origin of the band in question. It's clear that Thee Spivies saw this one coming from miles away.

"We were genetically created about three and a half years ago," quips Clark, "by a wayward NASA scientist in a small basement lab just outside of Gary, Indiana."

Upon wondering aloud what type of demented genius would force his creations to publicly dress this way offstage, Clark continues, "He was a little crazy, perhaps, and somewhat oppressive, but I wouldn't go so far as to say he was an 'evil' scientist. His goal was simply to engineer the world's most perfect band."

"And he came darned close," adds drummer Chris.

Thee Spivies' music is only a bit easier to date than it is to describe. The band claims that its influences run all the way back to the hillbilly music which predated rock 'n' roll. The most obvious touchstones, however, are to jangly early '60s pop, *a la* the Dave Clark Five, with healthy smatterings of Ventures-styled surf rock. Imagine your parents' favorite 33 r.p.m. vinyl pop albums played at 45 r.p.m. (if not 78). Toss in a bit of the mania of the Ramones' better known material. Shine it up, give it a nice clean haircut, add a decoder ring and a toy sparkler gun, and you're heading in Thee Spivies' direction. The X-ray glasses and membership cards are all part of the band's Planet Patrol—their "somewhat subtle world takeover."

"You've got to understand, though, it's not a hostile domination effort," explains Clark. "We're not trying to be *Thee Spivies: Overlords*. It's more of an awakening time."

Following assurances that the band has everyone's best interests in mind with their plan for supreme control, I remind Thee Spivies that many despots throughout history have claimed much the same thing. What sets Thee Spivies apart? "Twenty-twenty hindsight," suggests bassist Rob. Adds Clark, "You don't have to go along with the plan. It's just that in the end, you'll wish you had."—*Jeff Elbel*

reviews

Seven Day Jesus

Seven Day Jesus
ForeFront

The self-titled sophomore release from Seven Day Jesus opens with a familiar scene: Remote control in hand, the narrator flips around the TV channels, struggling to choose the least of all possible evils on the airwaves. As the lead track, "Down With the Ship," unfolds, the narrator realizes that the state of the world is pretty bad—but there is hope in Christ.

Jacketed in brilliant, shiny-happy, alternative pop-rock (big guitars and big melodies all around), the rest of the songs on *Seven Day Jesus* follow the lead, struggling with the choices we face in a broken and hurting world. The band's first album, *The Hunger*, released almost two years ago, established the group as an often moody proto-grunge outfit. They seemed still wet-behind-the-ears, but held lots of promise. With *Seven Day Jesus*, they make good on much of that promise, walking a fine line between catchy pop songwriting and modern rock production.

From the choppy, staccato guitar riff of "Down With the Ship" to the big-voice sing-along choruses and melodies of "Who I Am" and "Everybody Needs Love" and the moody breaks in "Sea of Forgetfulness" and "My Friend," Seven Day Jesus marries radio-friendly pop with big-chord guitar rock. Fifteen years ago, they called this "Power Pop" when The Romantics, The Cars and The Kinks ruled the airwaves. Now, along with groups like Poole and Fold Zandura, it's called "Pop Revivalism" or some other trendy label for music with big hooks, sweet melodies and a little bit of bite.

Thematically, the album balances pretty neatly between the questions and the answers, and how we deal with the consequences of our choices: "Always Comes Around" details the dangers of materialism and putting too much faith in this world; "End of My Rope" sketches out the dire straits we reach without the support and hope of Christ; "Who I Am" is a fuzzed-out anthem for those who feel the pressure to join the crowd (whether that means the non-Christians who expect you to abandon your faith, or the Christians who expect you to conform to their dress code).

The finale, "You Are the One," acknowledges the desperate need we have for God, yet admits that even a Christian still struggles with doubt and pain. It's an honest anthem that will ring true with anyone who is healing.

For many listeners, all that will matter is the music. On those terms, *Seven Day Jesus* might seem more ear candy than high art. Pity. Even then, though, this one is going to make you hit the play button more than once. —*Thompson Ridings-Brooks*

Speck

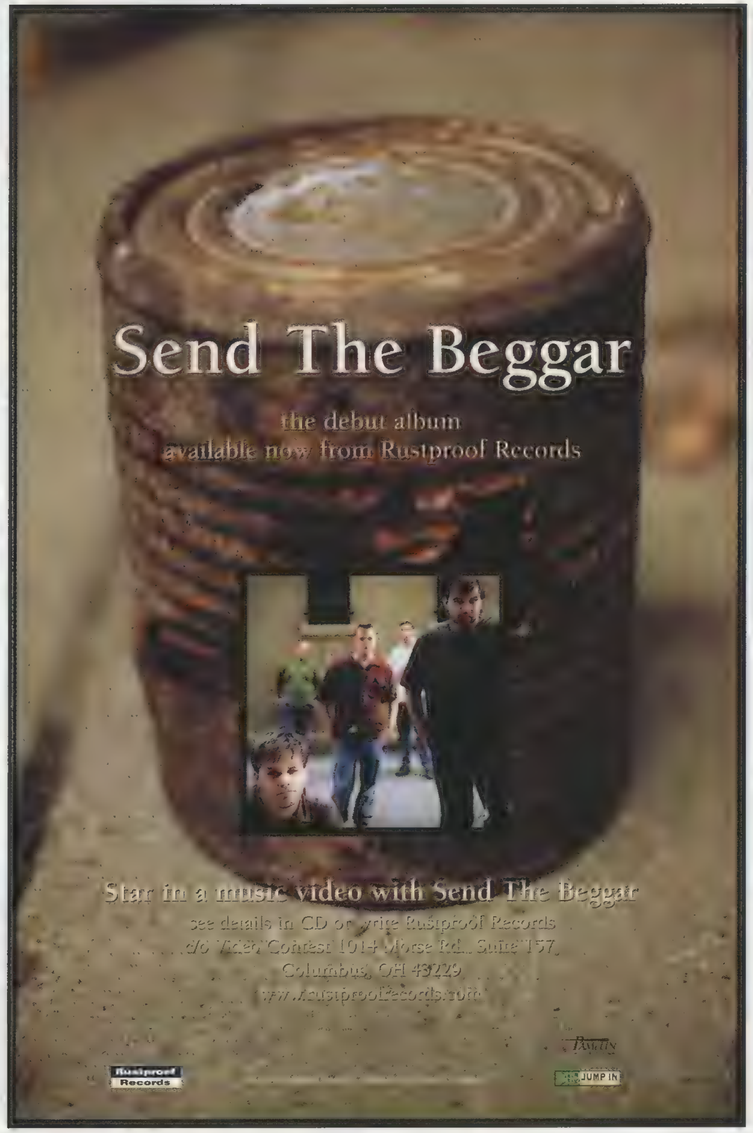
Speck
Bulletproof

Speck is a big sounding rock 'n' roll group with a very small name. Led by singer and songwriter Doug Hutchcraft, Speck's self-titled label debut is comprised of intelligent lyrics and punkish musical elements to create an enjoyable effort which serves to magnify the obvious talents of its four young members. Hutchcraft reveals a wide range of songwriting, from the blunt attack on racism with "Skin," to the self-deprecating humor of "Brilliant," which relegates pride to its proper place, and reminds us all that—much of the time—we're not nearly as brilliant as we think we are. "My Friend" is a great big blast of noisy energy which details the personal relationship that man can have with his Creator. Some of these songs veer a little too close to Bush-like musical familiarity. However, the majority of the songs on Speck shine with the kind of originality which makes the listener sit up and take notice. —*Dan MacIntosh*

LifeForm

Covering
Damascus Road

Who are those guys in the band LifeForm? dc Talk feeling mellow? The Bill Gaither Trio feeling feisty? DeGarmo & Key on a rock 'n' roll revival tour? Does anybody know? We went through the same juvenile gymnastics with the Swirling Eddies in the early part of this decade. The results are familiar: People spent their time listening to the record to try and discover the identity of the artists, rather than listening to the record for the music. The difference is that The Swirling Eddies was way out on a limb, musically and lyrically, at a time when the Christian market didn't know what to think about alternative music. LifeForm, however, is straight-forward, radio-ready, hooky pop-rock. The songs are primarily cover tunes, borrowed from the likes of Simple Minds and Crowded House, among others. Bottom line: This is a good album. Happy, upbeat, harmonious. Mikey likes it.—*Mike Parker*



reviews

Common Children

Delicate Fade
Tattoo

The opening strains of melancholy strings are a definite tip-off that Common Children is trying to put some distance between the predominantly grunge territory of its debut, *Skywire*, and the more subdued sounds of *Delicate Fade*. Guitarist/vocalist Mark Byrd, bassist Drew Powell and percussionist Hampton Eugene now pick their moments to howl (literally and figuratively) more judiciously, opting instead to perform with what might be described as a "quiet intensity." That's not to suggest all the wind has gone out of the band's sails, only that Common Children is determined to show it has more than a "one note samba" to offer. The patient listener will appreciate the sophisticated approach the band takes, increasing the volume gradually over the first four tracks of the disc, before finally allowing you the cathartic release of track five, "Burn." That song and "Pulse" are really the only tunes which strongly suggest the *Skywire* sound. Otherwise, Byrd, Powell & Eugene have moved toward modern rock staples such as Radiohead, Oasis, Bush, The Cure and The Choir. *Delicate Fade* was designed as a song cycle, but several songs, even taken out of context, stand out: "Indiscreet," with its powerful statement, *I bleed for you / I crawl for you / I fold myself / and I break in two;* "Eyes of God," which expresses the Lord's simultaneous love for and disappointment in us; "Pulse," which finds two hearts that once beat to the same rhythm now out of synch, and "Drift/Blue Raft/Storm Boy," a mini-epic which closes the album. This trilogy uses the metaphor of being adrift at sea and seeking comfort and direction. As with *Skywire*, what earns *Delicate Fade* its unique spot is the writing and vocal prowess of Mark Byrd. Byrd writes with an introspection that is so soul-baring as to almost be discomforting to the listener. As much as it is a healing thing to commune over these lyrics, you may, from time to time, find yourself thinking, "too much information." Still Common Children must be applauded for being painfully honest. It's certainly a welcome change from what one hears on many current releases. —*Bruce A. Brown*

Five Iron Frenzy

Our Newest Album Ever!
SaraBellum

Ska, because of its infectious rhythms and relentlessly cheery horn charts, is often characterized as simply fun, "good time music." Whether you're referring to mainstream or Christian ska, musicians loping about in ill-fitting, vintage suits are somewhat hard to take seriously. One group which seems to have broken away from that stereotype is Five Iron Frenzy. Sure, there's no shortage of zaniness in the band's stage show and on its two albums. But largely due to the efforts of chief lyricist Reese Roper, Five Iron has established itself as the thinking person's ska outfit. Rather than toss out quips for the sake of a laugh, Five Iron takes the approach of master jester Steve Taylor, using humor as a tool to make a serious point. In several songs on *Our Newest Album Ever*, FIF comes to grips with being one of the "poster children" for third wave Christian ska. The driving opener, "Handbook for the Sellout," sets the tone for this attitude. Over a bed of blistering horns (*a la* vintage Chicago or Blood, Sweat & Tears), Roper blasts those who follow musical trends like lemmings. That theme is carried through to "Superpowers" and "Litmus." The former takes another jab at fame and its attendant woes, while the latter reminds us not to gauge what forms of ministry are valid by our own fallible standards. It should be stressed that FIF's *Newest* is far from one-dimensional. Quite the contrary, in fashioning an album that has definite serious points to make, the band's sense of humor is all the sharper on the more comedic tracks. "Where's Micah?," for example, roasts the band's oft-tardy and absent guitarist; "Suckerpunch" pays tribute to those of us who feel like misfits; "Blue Comb '78" ties the loss of innocence to the loss of a beloved grooming tool, while "Oh, Canada" toasts our neighbors from the Great White North (FIF earns extra credit on this track for mentioning the lovely and talented William Shatner). Everything about *Newest*, from the artwork by Doug TenNapel to the production by Masaki, throws down the gauntlet to other ska artists. Five Iron Frenzy is easily competitive with any mainstream ska band, and its standard-raising musical performance on this disc only bodes well for the future of the genre in Christian music. —*Bruce A. Brown*

Broomtree

Broomtree
Rustproof Records

Hailing from Ohio, it's no surprise Broomtree has some things in common with neighbors Morella's Forest and Belly. Sometimes described as "hard and happy chick music" (as you'll hear for yourself on the record), the straight-ahead guitar rock and little-girl-lost vocals of Kylie Schilg charge through simple songs of faith and devotion. The main songwriter, as well as guitarist and vocalist, Schilg writes many of her songs either as a call to salvation or for the Christian to recommit his or her life. It's an electric presentation, one simple—and rockin'—enough to be an effective tract for many hanging on the fringes of the church. As Schilg matures as a songwriter, it will be interesting to see where she goes from here. Meanwhile, *Broomtree* holds enough power chords and feedback to make its point. —*Nik Barnes*

The Channelsurfers

Tunnel Vision
Organic

With a name like The Channelsurfers, a smorgasbord of musical styles and pop culture references are to be expected. On their debut, *Tunnel Vision*, the band fuses punk, reggae and funk, all the while discussing and dissecting disposable modern culture. Highlights include: "Lonely Guy," which rattles off a series of famous "lonely guys," including TV characters, newsmakers and actors whose public personae fit the bill; "C.T.C.," which displays quirky Beck-ish qualities as vocalist Jason Brown yells over a retro-funk track; and the reggae-flavored "So Far Away" and "First Stone." Sharing a sense of humor, and an ability to make original songs that will breathe originality into the cluttered alternative market, the members of The Channelsurfers have made a winner with *Tunnel Vision*. They should be around a long time. —*Dan Ewald*

Jesus Music

3-D
Organic

Proving to be one of the most fun musical surprises of recent memory, the band Jesus Music fuses bright-colored guitar pop and imaginative metaphors. On *3-D*, the band draws from such unlikely, diverse musical traditions as The Doors, The B-52s, Talking Heads and XTC. Their groovin' (and groovy) psychedelic-flavored guitar music is wrapped around such statements as "3-D" (celebrating the broader perspective you can get from being Born Again), "More Than Tuesday" (about the importance of living out your faith), and "At the Movies" (contrasting the facade of make-believe with the harshness of reality). They explore the issue of self-esteem through a trilogy: The brooding "Painless Shame" uses a dark groove to comment, *You must love yourself before anybody else can*; "Child of the Living God" rapid-fires all of the self-recriminations that only God's love can heal; the off-kilter "Misfit Toy" (referencing the TV special *Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer*) outlays how fractured we are, but we can be repaired by "the Master Toymaker." *3-D* also includes the hilarious pairing of "Born to Be Wild" (yes, the hippie classic rock song) and the disco-fied "Wild Child," which urges listeners to not be lukewarm, but excited about their faith. *3-D* is a rare find. If your youth group is throwing a shindig, I'd be hard pressed to think of a better party record. —*Mark Reno*

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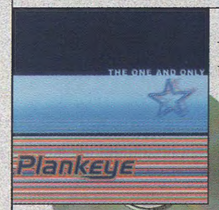
reviews

Plankeye



The One And Only
BEC

The One And Only begins with a glorious blast of pounding drums, a wailing harmonica, and a bouncing guitar riff which announces through the song "Someday" that Plankeye has once again hit the bull's-eye with its piercingly sharp rock 'n' roll. Plankeye's sound is an unlikely mixture of punk passion, hyperactive new wave, and simple, straight-ahead rock 'n' roll. The instruments are distinctive and balanced, without ever sounding studio sterile. The songs rock hard, yet never lose those all-important poppy melodic hooks. Many of these songs grew out of the kinds of struggles which inevitably accompany a band that is experiencing the kinds of growing pains which Plankeye has faced over the past few years. It's graduated from the small halls to the theaters, and its members have had to grow up to meet these new challenges. With each new step up the ladder, the decisions get bigger, and each of these has lasting consequences. This puts strains on the members which alternate between pulling them apart and knitting them back together again. These kinds of emotional surgeries are well detailed with the songs on *The One And Only*. "It's Been So Very Long" grapples with the notion of what it means to be a man who is in a relationship with a woman. Sometimes this maturation involves learning how to "Compromise," and how to behave in the real world, instead of playing by "Playground" rules. "Let's Try Again Tomorrow" documents a time where the band argued so vehemently that it almost forgot what it was like to be a free and easy rock band that could just "fall down laughing" in the face of difficulties. Instead, they had to learn to forgive each other, and start all over in the morning. Plankeye is an oddity in that it retains its zesty youthful enthusiasm as it matures. It expresses this progress with a lot of nervous energy; energy which often gets in its way of making any headway. Or, as Scott Silletta sings, "put a muzzle on my mouth when I get so very anxious." It's OK to calm down a little, fellas, but don't ever put a muzzle on this great rock 'n' roll energy. In spite of its complex obstacle course of a career path, Plankeye's musical aim is always true.

—Dan MacIntosh

Tourniquet

Crawl to China
Diadem

With the sudden global acceptance of Stryper in the late '80s, Christian music experienced an explosion of new metal acts, like Sacred Warrior, Shout and Whitecross, playing every variety of metal from thrash, speed, skate, and melodic to you-name-the-qualifier. At the top of the metal heap was a band called Tourniquet. Known for their genuine artistic talent and politically-charged lyrics, Tourniquet developed a dedicated following. Tourniquet's latest, *Crawl To China,* finds the former grunge-metal trio exploring a variety of musical genres, from classic thrash to acoustic folk, with a little arena rock thrown in for good measure. Yes, there is the obligatory rough-as-gravel vocal screams, the thundering guitar leads and trademark double-kick wall of drums. And there are the literate, unvarnished lyrics, delivered with passion and art. And the production is slick. You don't even have to read the lyric sheet to understand the words! OK, so maybe that's a negative for die-hard metal fans. But I like it. Tourniquet seems to be a band that has come to grips with who they are, and they like themselves. Best cuts include the Alice Cooper-esque "Enveloped in Python," the surprising acoustic "If I Were There," and the enigmatically titled "Claustrospelunker."

—Mike Parker

World Wide Message Tribe

Revived
Warner Alliance

With their hard-hitting mix of melodic Brit pop, poly-rhythmic dance grooves, angelic vocals and gruff rapping, The World Wide Message Tribe has rocked the high schools in Manchester, England, with great music and solid Gospel message. Because they are so focused on the schools in Manchester, their appearances in the States have been few and far between. *Revived* is a collection of some of their best that will catch anyone up, and give the fans something new to chew on, as well. More than just a retrospective, *Revived* includes several alternate and remixed versions of past songs, two brand new songs, and some tracks that had gone out of print. Highlights include the sashay of the remixed "I'm On My Way to Zion," the dark, angular groove of "In My Life," the classical-meets-the-dance-floor instrumental "The Return of the Queen of Sheba" and the jazz-flavored dance pop of "Joy." It's a shame the liner notes didn't provide more artistic perspective; it does a good job of giving some personal history (well, a little bit), but there are no clues where the songs were originally released. Still, that is a pretty small complaint, and this is one big dance-pop record.

—Drake Mersill

Charts reprinted courtesy of the Pure Rock Report, compiled from airplay reports of more than 80 radio stations and programs nationwide. The Pure Rock Report is a biweekly tip sheet for the Christian rock industry. Contact the PRR at (614) 272-6227 or on the World Wide Web at [www.netwalk.com/~prr]. List of radio reporters provided by Pure Rock Report.

Rock

1 MISS ANGIE — Lift My Eyes (Myrrh)
2 GRAMMATRAIN — Jonah (ForeFront)
3 WHITEHEART — Jesus (Curb)
4 JARS OF CLAY — Crazy Times (Essential)
5 GEOFF MOORE & THE DISTANCE — I'm Free (ForeFront)
6 REALITY CHECK — The Way I Am (StarSong)
7 SILAGE — My Car Makes Me Sin (Sub·Lime)
8 PFR — Name (Sparrow)
9 SHADED RED — Let It Out (Cadence)
10 PLUMB — Sobering (Essential)
11 SWITCHFOOT — Ode to Chin (re:think)
12 SIXPENCE NONE THE RICHER — Love (Squint)
13 BLEACH — Perfect Family (ForeFront)
14 GUARDIAN — Salvation (Myrrh)
15 THE ALTERED — John's Lament (Curb)

Modern

1 MISS ANGIE — Lift My Eyes (Myrrh)
2 SILAGE — My Car Makes Me Sin (Sub·Lime)
3 PLUMB — Sobering (Essential)
4 MODEL ENGINE — Hang You Upside Down (SaraBellum)
5 FIVE IRON FRENZY — Cool Enough for You (5 Minute Walk)
6 ROSE BLOSSOM PUNCH — Haunted Church (SaraBellum)
7 SWITCHFOOT — Ode to Chin (re:think)
8 THE SUPERTONES — Resolution (BEC)
9 JARS OF CLAY — Crazy Times (Essential)
10 THE ALTERED — John's Lament (Curb)
11 VALUE PAC — Nothing (BEC)
12 GRAMMATRAIN — Jonah (ForeFront)
13 HOKUS PICK — I'm So Happy (Freedom)
14 3 CAR PILE-UP — Dweeb (Narrowpath)
15 SIXPENCE NONE THE RICHER — Love (Squint)

Rhythmic

1 GOD'S PROPERTY — Stomp (B-Rite)
2 WORLD WIDE MESSAGE TRIBE — Jumping In the House of God (Warner Alliance)
3 UNITY KLAN — Jesus Is in the House (Rescue)
4 GOSPEL HOUSING AUTHORITY — Heavenbound (N·Soul)
5 MAXIMILLIAN — Deeper Than Most (N·Soul)
6 T-BONE — Demon Executor (Metro One)
7 JOY ELECTRIC — Monosynth (BEC)
8 GRITS — Mirage (Gotee)
9 THE ECHOING GREEN — Face of God (Myx)
10 OUT OF EDEN — Greater Love (Gotee)

Loud

1 EVERY DAY LIFE — Pushing (Alarma)
2 TOURNIQUET — Crawl to China (Diadem)
3 DISCIPLE — Fill My Shoes (Warner Resound)
4 LIVING SACRIFICE — Reject (Tooth & Nail)
5 NAILED — Don't Blame Me (Rugged)
6 CRASHDOG — Proclamation (Grrr)
7 ETERNAL DECISION — Risen (Cling)
8 ZAO — Times of Separation (Tooth & Nail)
9 SANCTIFIED SISTER — Pharmakeia (Hour House)
10 P.O.D. — Full Color (Rescue)

modern rock reporters
CKCU 93.1 FM — Ottawa, ONT — Sunday 9 AM
KADU 90.1 FM — Hibbing, MN — 24 Hours
KCLC 89.1 FM — St. Charles, MO — Saturday 7 PM
WCUW 91.3 FM — Worcester, MA — Tuesday 10 PM
WITR 89.7 FM — Rochester, NY — Friday 10 PM
WQKO 91.9 FM — Howe, IN — 24 Hours
WUFM 88.7 FM — Columbus, OH — 24 Hours

rock reporters
KADU 90.1 FM — Hibbing, MN — 24 Hours
KCLC 89.1 FM — St. Charles, MO — Saturday 7 PM
WAIF 88.3 FM — Cincinnati, OH — Saturday 8 PM
WITR 89.7 FM — Rochester, NY — Friday 10 PM
WQFL 100.9 FM — Rockford, IL — Saturday 9 PM
WQKO 91.9FM — Howe, IN — 24 Hours
WUFM 88.7 FM — Columbus, OH — 24 Hours
WVOF 88.5 FM — Bridgeport, CT — Sunday 9 PM

loud reporters
CFCR 90.5 FM — Saskatoon, SASK — Monday 9 PM
KCLC 89.1 FM — St. Charles, MO — Saturday 7 PM
WITR 89.7 FM — Rochester, NY — Friday 10 PM
WTTU 88.5 FM — Nashville, TN — Sunday 7 PM
WVOF 88.5 FM — Bridgeport, CT — Sunday 9 PM

rap/club reporters
WCUW 91.3 FM — Worcester, MA — Sunday 4 PM
WITR 89.7 FM — Rochester, NY — Friday 10 PM
WUFM 88.7 FM — Columbus, OH — Saturday 7 PM

pure rock report

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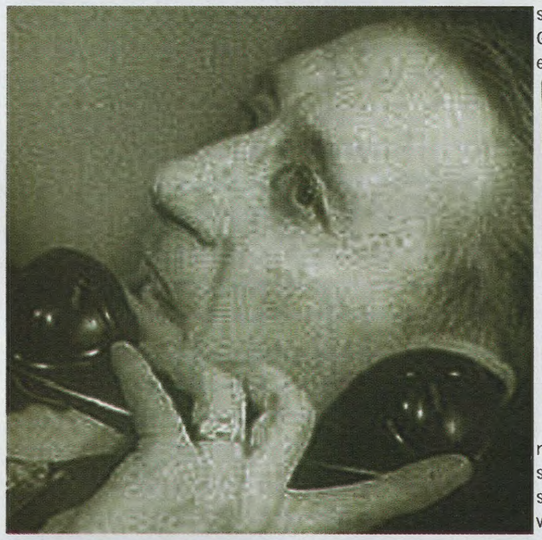

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A New Year's Resolution

Recently, I met a 16-year-old, tattooed, pierced, purple-haired kid in Pennsylvania who told me he was an outcast in his youth group. The only reason he goes to church is out of obedience to the Scriptures and to worship God. He understands the importance of submitting to the authority of the Gospel. He believes it is necessary to be part of the church, even if that means he may never hear anything relevant from his particular youth pastor. He understands that the church and all the people in it, including himself, will fail. He says his church and the people in it just don't have the kind of life he has. But he continues to be obedient, focusing on Christ, hoping one day to be a catalyst for change.

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Then, there was the 15-year-old girl in Maryland I met at an All Star United concert. She was smoking a cigarette and I noticed she was spraying perfume all over her clothes. "I don't want to upset my mom when she picks me up," she said. I asked her why she smoked if she knew her mom would not approve. She started crying as she told me her mom smokes pot every night in front of her and her brothers and sisters. "So," she asked, "why should it matter anyway?" I was stunned. Speechless. Somehow, I managed to ask if she went to church. "Yes, every Sunday, Tuesday, and Wednesday, for the past two years." And she was proud of that. She invites her mom every single week, but her mom just won't go. She told me she's confident Jesus can change her mom's life. Her mom, sometimes, actually takes her to church and waits outside. Sounds like a mom with potential to me.

I hear these stories every week. People all around us are hurting. They have needs and we're not meeting them. Here's an idea for your New Year's resolution—let's pay more attention to people. **LET'S RECOGNIZE THE GUY WITH PURPLE HAIR AND INVITE THE POT-SMOKING MOMS TO CHURCH.** Let's help each other out just a little more. That's the Spirit of Christ. I'm not saying anything profound here, but it helps to be reminded once in a while. In 1998, let's try and meet more people's needs. Let's show somebody what unconditional love and grace is really about.

Happy New Year,
Frank Chimento

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2/4 - Jacksonville, FL - (904)249-2307
2/6 - West Palm Beach, FL - (954)525-8577
2/7 - St. Petersburg, FL - (813)898-0070
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2/13 - Paris, KY - (606)987-6643
2/14 - Lakeland, TN - (901)377-3372
2/16 - Tarrant, AL - (205)972-8288
2/19 - Oklahoma City, OK - (405)681-6200
2/20 - Tulsa, OK - (918)258-3080
2/21 - Arlington, TX - (817)261-9778

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